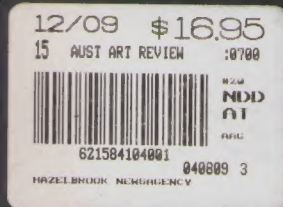


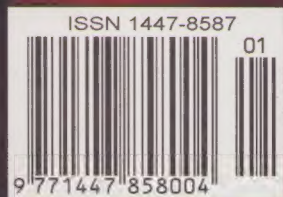
# AAR

AUSTRALIAN ART REVIEW

Icons of the desert  
Kathy Temin at Heide  
Kudditji Kngwarreye



AUG-OCT 2009 Issue 20  
AUST \$16.95 INCL. GST  
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Plus: events,  
profiles &  
reviews

Restoration of bark  
paintings  
Sculpture by the Sea,  
Cottesloe



# Betty Club Mbitjana



Betty Club Mbitjana, 'Aweyle', 2009, 152cm x 152cm, acrylic on canvas

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選書白題  
世通造化

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*Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole, University of Hong Kong*

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## Tim White



*The Beekeeper (detail)*, 2009, giclee print, 49 x 39cm

### True North – Whakarongomaiki

Exhibition and Book Launch,  
in association with Harper's Bazaar

until 9 August 2009

## Dr Lisa Anderson



*Paris Angels # 6*, 2009, mixed media on canvas, 61 x 61cm

Paris Angels, works from the Cite  
International des Arts (residency) Paris

12 August – 6 September 2009

## Peter Cameron



*Hampton Hill # 51*, 2009, oil on linen, 138 x 138cm

Paintings from Hill End and  
Millamolong Station

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## Margarita Georgiadis



*Across the Open Field*, 2009, oil on canvas, 20 x 20cm

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David Frazer *Half way Home* 2009, etching, 41.5 x 49.5cm



Jason Benjamin *The Calling*, Pencil and watercolour, 100 x 200cm



Deborah Klein *Clipped wings*, Linocut, hand coloured, 56 x 38cm each panel

## Artists in Residence

### July

Deborah Klein

David Frazer/Peter Lancaster

### August

Mike Parr/John Loane

### September

Roberto Marquez

Bill Young

## Up and coming

Jane Burton (November 2009)

Rosalind Atkins (December 2009)

Brenda Runnegar (January 2010)

Geoffrey Ricardo/Heidi (February 2010)

Mike Parr (March 2010)

Jon Cattapan/Bill Young (March 2010)

Domenico De Clario (May 2010)

Shane Jones (June)

Bill Young and Anita Laurence (July 2010)

Juan Ford (August 2010)

## Solo Exhibitions

### July

David Frazer

Deborah Klein

### August

Mike Parr

### September

Mike Parr

## Workshops and special events

### July 11th

Rudy Kistler Open Studio at  
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### July 25th

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26  
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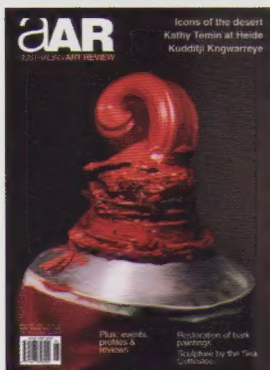
Detail | Makinti Napanangka, Untitled, synthetic polymer paint on linen, h 122 x w 137 cm, winner Telstra Award,  
25th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award 2009.



# AAR

## AUSTRALIAN ART REVIEW

Issue 20  
Aug-Oct 2009



Cover: Brett East, *Everything We've Been Through Can Only Make Us Stronger* (detail), 2009, oil on canvas, 137 x 102cm. Courtesy the artist and Gallery 9, Sydney.

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### Contributors

Who writes for *aAR*?

### Editorial

## aARTlook

A brief look at newsworthy events, exhibitions, publications, new galleries, and arts organisations.

## Profiles and features

### Queensland University of Technology collection

JEREMY ECCLES applauds the Queensland University of Technology for establishing a gallery to showcase works by the Queensland painter William Robinson.

### Burrup

A north-western Australian region is the scene of conflicting passions over the preservation of its petroglyphs. *aAR* casts an eye over the interested parties.

### In conversation

Alan Lloyd, the recently retired head conservator from the Art Gallery of New South Wales, talks to *aAR*'s editor about developments in the conservation department and the forty-five happy years he spent there.

### Conservation and restoration

A compilation of framers, conservators and restorers Australia wide.

### Utopia art

ANNEMARIE LOPEZ profiles a gallery with a sterling history of Aboriginal art representation.

### Five

Jackie Menzies, the Head Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, discusses five works which have left a singular impression on her.

### All in the family

The works of Kudditji Kngwarreye could not be more different from those of his older sister Emily Kame Kngwarreye, but they are equally



arresting. PRUE GIBSON draws attention to his Emu Dreaming paintings.

### Gallery 9

PRUE GIBSON discusses four artists from a gallery in Darlinghurst which has some of the most serene exhibition spaces in Sydney.

### Care and restoration of Aboriginal bark paintings

BEATA TWOREK-MATUSZKIEWICZ tells *aAR*'s readers how they might best care for works created with pigments on bark, and what kind of display environments should be avoided.

### A remarkable discovery

The true identity of both sitter and painter of an enigmatic sixteenth-century Italian work has been revealed, thanks to science and sleuthing by CARL VILLIS.

### Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri

JOSEPH BRENNAN casts an eye over the peripatetic life of a painter who created works of dazzling complexity and great beauty.

### Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe

KEN SCARLETT travels to Western Australia to experience this rewarding exhibition and report on its diversity.

### 26th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award

JOKO GORDON creates a context for the rise and rise of this Indigenous award and touches on some of the dilemmas it faces.



## Exhibitions

### South Australia: Max Hart Collection of Aboriginal bark paintings

STEPHANIE RADOK explains to the reader how Max Hart was more than just a collector — he was a pioneer of Aboriginal studies.

### Western Australia: Birdsong

ANDREW NICHOLLS discusses the recent works of Paul Uhlmann, which were produced during a residency at the Fremantle Arts Centre in Western Australia.

### Australian Capital Territory: McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907–1917

Frederick McCubbin became a freer painter in his later years. SASHA GRISHIN explains how this made him a more interesting painter.

### Victoria: Kathy Temin's survey show

TRENT WALTER traces the themes of memory and place through an exhibition mounted at the Heide Museum in Victoria.

### New South Wales: A surprise package from Holland

ANNEMARIE LOPEZ makes it clear that scale, boldness and colour were not just the prerogative of the American post-war painters.

### Queensland: Floating Life: Contemporary Aboriginal Fibre Art

Not all Indigenous art is on bark or canvas. LOUISE MARTIN-CHEW reviews an exhibition at the Queensland Art Gallery which features ceremonial poles, traps, baskets and jewellery.

### Tasmania: The Museum of unNatural History

BRIONY DOWNES examines how memory and experience mesh together in Tricky Walsh's art.

### New South Wales: Fibonacci Trees

CRAIG JUDD takes us to the grounds of a ducal castle in Pomerania where Richard Dunn has produced works which revisit Fibonacci's ideas and invests them with a curious poetry.

### Editor's choice

Patricia Anderson casts an eye over notable exhibitions, some presented over recent months and others taking place now.

### Advertising index

### Last Word

ROBIN WALLACE-CRABBE wonders if anyone takes any pleasure in making art anymore.

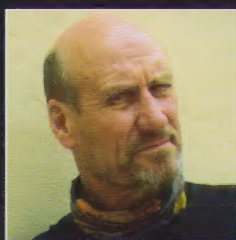


# aAR

## contributors



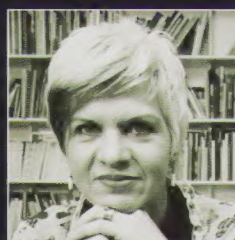
Prue Gibson



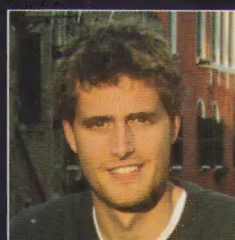
Jeremy Eccles



Joseph Brennan



Louise Martin-Chew



Ben Garrard

**Editor: Patricia Anderson's** publications include *Art + Australia: Debates, Dollars & Delusions*, *Contemporary Jewellery in Australia and New Zealand* and *Elwyn Lynn's Art World*. She has been a Sydney art critic for *The Australian*, and has contributed essays and book reviews to *The Financial Review*, London's *Apollo*, *Australian Book Review*, *Quadrant* (as a contributing editor), *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Art & Australia*. Her most recent book *Robert Hughes: the Australian Years* will be released this year.

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**Annemarie Lopez** is a freelance writer. She has lectured in the University of Sydney Fine Arts Department and has written regularly about the arts in Australia and France.

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**Beata Tworek-Matuszkiewicz** is the Head Conservator of objects at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

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**Craig Judd** is an independent curator, writer, commentator and the former Senior Curator of Art, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

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**Briony Downes** is a Hobart-based writer who contributes to art and design magazines Australia wide.

**Robin Wallace-Crabbe** is an artist and novelist who has published fourteen books. He is currently working on a series of drawings of dancers being themselves.

**Carl Villis** is the Conservator of European Painting before 1800 at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. He has previously worked at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.



# A little history of mistaken identity



For art museums the road to acquisitions is paved with pitfalls. For example, a costly acquisition might later prove to have been an overly optimistic attribution. Or perhaps a country will claim that works left their domain unlawfully. In 1993, the Turkish government asked New York's Metropolitan Museum to return the so-called 'Lydian Hoard' — some 363 pieces — believed to be the treasure of King Croesus from the seventh century BC.

Today, as a consequence of massive looting across Europe in WW II, works in museums with gaps in their provenance between 1939 and 1945 are being scrutinised. Most recently, motivated hopefuls have come bearing quarry loads of gifts and specific suggestions and requests about how these might be highlighted in order to draw attention to the donor. And lastly, museum acquisition policies mutate over time, sometimes in accordance with the preoccupations of their directors. Occasionally, ill-considered works — a result of a rush of blood to the head or a precipitate gesture born of limelight deficiency — enter the institution, there to languish in the basement.

To return to hopeful attributions. The most recent disappointment inflicted on the National Gallery of Victoria was the discovery that Van Gogh's *Head of a Man*, acquired in 1939, was painted by someone else. The trustees had recommended its purchase from one Captain Victor Alexander Cazalet, a British Conservative party member and a supporter of General Franco.

Eighteen years earlier, NGV paid £31,395 for 'Jan van Eyck's' *The Virgin and Child*, which had been discovered in Lancashire in 1850. In 1958, it was being examined by the Institute Royal du Patrimoine Artistique in Brussels, where it was found that apart from 'stylistic' differences, the paint constituents and the structure of the paint layers were inconsistent with fifteenth-century Flemish practice. The inscription, however, resisted all attempts by chemical analysis to show that it was not painted at the same time.

Does the discovery that a particularly fine work is by the hand of an unknown painter diminish its excellence in the eyes of art

scholars? It may do. It certainly diminishes the price of the work should it be placed back into the marketplace — but this is an unlikely scenario.

In 1933, the National Gallery of Victoria found itself in possession of an oil, *Self Portrait*, by Rembrandt, purchased for £26,500, after some sleuth discovered it at the Duke of Portland's Welbeck Abbey. When the work arrived in Melbourne it was informally demoted by sundry experts and the *coup de grâce* would be delivered in 1984 after a visit by the Rembrandt Research Project. It would hence be labelled: 'in the manner of Rembrandt'.

Melbourne's purchase of a 'Rembrandt' in 1933 and a 'van Eyck' in 1921 illustrates a particular dilemma. This is the question of stylistic verisimilitude. If we believe in the idea of 'genius' — the absolute stylistic unassailability of a painter — as is the case with Rembrandt, how do we reconcile this with the idea that his magic stylistic fingerprint can, with exactitude, be reproduced by handfuls of his apprentices and followers, and indeed copyists, who have never stood in the same room — let alone the same century — as the master.

As if to atone for these past mishaps, a small work hanging quietly on the walls of the National Gallery of Victoria for some forty years has been identified — thanks to investigations by a conservator who specialises in Italian paintings: Carl Willis. It's Dosso Dossi's portrait of Lucrezia Borgia, the hapless daughter of Pope Alexander VI and sister of Cesare Borgia, whose exploits were documented in Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

Willis discusses his find with readers in these pages. Further, in keeping with this issue's focus on conservation, restoration and Aboriginal art, *aAR* is fortunate to have Beata Tworek-Matuszkiewicz, a senior conservator at the National Gallery of Australia, discussing the conservation of Aboriginal bark paintings and the recollections of head conservator Alan Lloyd, who recently retired after a marathon of forty-five years from the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

*Patricia Anderson*



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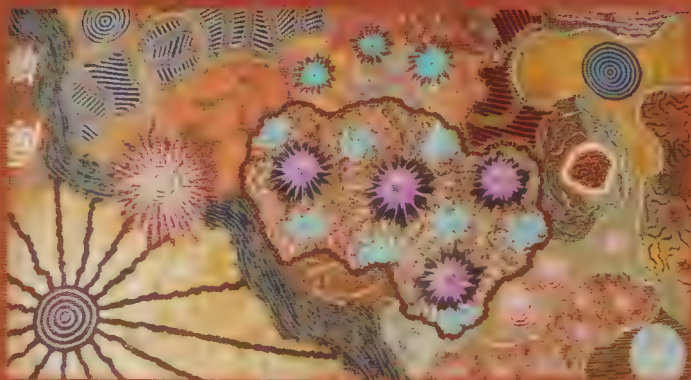


Australia Dreaming Art

## Michelle Possum Nungarrayi - New Works

Aug 21 - Sep 19

Daughter of Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri (deceased) and sister to Gabriella Possum Nungarrayi, Michelle celebrates her first solo show in several years.



Michelle Possum Nungarrayi, 'New Works', 2009, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 180cm

## Chris Edwards - Nganyundl Mliml: My Mother

July 17 - Aug 16

Chris Edwards is a descendant of the Gumbaynggir people from Nambucca Heads in northern NSW. In Chris' first exhibition for Australia Dreaming Art he has paid homage to his mother.



Chris Edwards, 'Nganyundl Mliml: My Mother', 2009, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 180cm

## Peter Waples - Crown

Sep 25 - Oct 23

Exciting Melbourne based artist of Wiradjuri Ngarigo descent explores the complexity of contemporary Indigenous identity. Influenced by street art, traditional Aboriginal culture, pop art, subcultures, humour and the craft art debate Peter says 'My art like me is about how my identities play out in my contemporary Australian urban environment.'



Peter Waples, 'Crown', 2009, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 180cm

Peter Waples, 'Crown', 2009, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 180cm

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# A timely event

As recently as fifty years ago, Australia was pursuing a policy that actively sought to remove Aboriginal people from their traditional lands, separate family groups and thereby prevent the inheritance of cultural knowledge, rites, language and religion. The incremental reversal of this policy has been a long time coming and events like the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair aim to encourage and facilitate the passing down of culture and tradition in story, song, dance and art.

At the opening of the Djumbunji Press earlier this year, Seith Fourmile of the Idindji people — traditional landowners in the Cairns area — urged people to remember that “even though buildings might sit on top of country, that country is still the same underneath, and those stories are still the same, they never die. The thing is to ... keep those stories and culture strong.”

As one of the last remaining cultures in the world to retain a spiritual conception of man's relationship to the environment, it is appropriate now more than ever that we protect this alternative philosophy as a counterpoint to the industrial and anthropocentric philosophy of the West that seems to have set us on a one-way course to environmental disaster and climate-crisis.

According to Ian J McNiven, author of *Saltwater People: spiritscapes, maritime rituals and the archaeology of Australian indigenous seascapes*, Aboriginal people experience more of an ontological than a technological relationship with the land and “seascapes are imbued with spiritual forces that can be engaged ritually”. At

a time when the globe is largely homogenising its culture and politics, exporting this concept of cultural and spiritual sensitivity to land and ocean is perhaps not as naive and idealistic as one might at first think.

The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair is one of the primary features in the Queensland government's multifaceted plan to support Indigenous art that only two years ago saw the injection of ten million dollars into the industry to support art centre networks and hubs, develop dance and music programs and art workshops, and establish the Djumbunji Press for fine art printmaking. Art centres themselves are not new — with a centre having been in operation in the Aurukun region for over fifty years — but only in the last ten years have centres have begun seeking a commercial market for their art.

Given the seven-figure price tags on some of the central desert works to have recently gone under the hammer, such as Emily Kame Kngwarreye's *Earth's Creation*, it is no wonder that government and private galleries alike are crashing the party. Combine this groundswell in domestic interest with the establishment in 2003 of the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency (see *aAR* Issue 18) and a picture emerges of a young industry experiencing exponential growth.

The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair will take place across a number of venues, including the Tanks Arts Centre (a converted WW II fuel storage warehouse for the Royal Australian Navy) and will feature several artists who have been making waves on the international scene recently. Sally Gabori, a Kaiadilt woman in her eighties who first put paint to canvas just four years ago during a visit to Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre, has already had her work *Ninjiiki* acquired by the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris.

She will be joined by Dennis Nona whose work, with the aid of the Australian Art Print Network, has been exhibited with fellow Torres Strait Islander artist Alick Tipoti's around Australia and at leading commercial galleries overseas, including in Manhattan's fashionable Chelsea arts precinct.

Ben Garrard

Direct link at [www.artreview.com.au](http://www.artreview.com.au)



Susie Pascoe, *Small Stones and Long River Below*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas 177 x 153cm. Courtesy Lockhart River art Centre and the artist. Photograph Mick Richards



Ron Yunkaporta, *Thuuth Thaa'munth* (Law Poles), detail, 2006, ochres with acrylic binder on cottonwood, bush string, ibis feathers. Largest: 167cm. Collection Aboriginal Art Museum, Utrecht. Photograph Mick Richards. Image courtesy Queensland Indigenous Art Marketing and Export Agency (QIAMEA)



Sally Gabori, *Dibirdibi Country*, 2008, synthetic polymer paint on linen, 200 x 600cm. Purchased with funds from Margaret and Cathryn Mittelheuser through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Collection: Queensland Art Gallery. Courtesy Mornington Island Arts, Queensland, Alcaston Gallery, Victoria, and the artist. Photograph Chris Groenhout.



**Fairweather**

Murray Bail  
Murdoch Books  
ISBN: 978-1-74196-356-4  
280 pages  
RRP \$125

Ian Fairweather's life is sufficiently exotic and appalling for a number of reviewers of Murray Bail's recently revised book on Fairweather to have given more space to recounting his life, rather than reviewing Bail's act of homage.

Bail's identification with Fairweather (Bail owns two of his works) stems from Fairweather's resistance to all the blandishments and comforts which most lesser mortals — including Bail — succumb to even as they aspire to austerity. And, most importantly, Bail has identified with the painter's urge to achieve some fugitive synthesis — some stilling of the welling tide of sensations — which is also the imperative of the writer.

Fairweather's threadbare existence barely sustained his painting activities. Until he settled on Bribe Island, north of Brisbane, in 1953, he had fled from one place after another, and the remembered visions of these places — populated with the people he shrank from — later filled his canvases. Surviving works from the late 1950s onwards were paintings which moved closer to abstraction while never entirely jettisoning a visible human presence. In these works the physical realities of place, space and form dissolved and reformed themselves onto a single painterly plane, held together entirely by an invisible template — or web — of memory and feeling.

The publisher suggests that the book (first published in 1981) has been completely rewritten. This is not quite the case and becomes evident when

the two volumes are placed side by side. And why ought it to be? Why would a writer jettison earlier insights if they prove durable? However, there is much new material, and many images and photographs have been thoughtfully subtracted and added. Some of Bail's oracular but unexamined announcements are a bit mystifying, and his championship of Fairweather has delivered (in interview) an offhand snub to Australian landscape painters generally, who he dismisses as parochial. As readers of his novels know, Bail is a list maker, and sometimes this can be an arid and pinched process. It also nettles Bail that Fairweather has not received the attention given to his

contemporaries such as Sidney Nolan, saying in interview: "You can easily walk past a Fairweather" and yet anyone with any sort of aesthetic antenna is more likely to pause first and foremost before the latter. And, as the auction rooms attest, there has been a precipitous rise in prices of his work.

Fairweather's offerings are as physically frail as they are visually robust, and can be a conservator's nightmare. Some pigments have faded and particles have floated free, but this precariousness — a metaphor for the artist's life — may make the acquisition of a Fairweather work even more precious. Here was an artist who painted to propitiate inner demons — demons who may have been stilled by the tremulous rhythms which flowed from the tip of his brush. What became of the paintings later was of scant interest to him.

Physically, this is a robust and handsome book. Some of the illustrations unfold, and the paper has provided an excellent matrix for the earth and chalky colours which characterise a considerable portion of Fairweather's early output. The only jarring note is the use of one of Fairweather's less interesting works (which appears to be out of focus) on the cover of the book.

PA



Ian Fairweather. **Yggdrasil**, 1961–62, synthetic polymer paint and gouache on cardboard on hardboard, 68.5 x 24.6cm. Macquarie University Art Collection, Sydney



Ian Fairweather. **Painting**, 1959, synthetic polymer paint and gouache on newspaper, 46 x 57cm. Macquarie University Art Collection





## In the frame — Charles Hewitt

GK Chesterton once wrote that "art consists of limitation. The essence of every picture is the frame." In doing so he touched on an area the philosophical and practical importance of which is often overlooked.

For Australia's master framer, however, it is a daily concern. Charles Hewitt began his framing business in 1964. The Beatles were touring Australia and the Menzies government refused to ratify equal pay for women. While a lot has changed in Australia since then, Hewitt's entrepreneurial spirit and tenacious adherence to quality have not.

Having provided frames for art heavyweights such as Brett Whiteley and Russell Drysdale, Hewitt's business achieved its apogee in 1980 when the newly formed National Gallery of Australia commissioned him to make over 400 frames for the remounting of works from the Colonial period to *Blue Poles* in their permanent collection. Forty years in the game has given Hewitt a satellite view of framing trends. He notes: "After years of minimal, or non-existent frames, there is a definite sense that 'the frame' is returning. The look is for aged and 'distressed' surfaces." Hewitt's artisan workshop has been hand-producing such frames for decades but also accepts modest commissions. "I have always cast a very wide net in my business, contrary to popular belief," he says, "I am prepared to frame *whatever* comes through the door ... priced on a par with other framers."



Charles Hewitt framed by his works.

It is this egalitarian bent that has seen Hewitt through lean years, along with a diversification of his services. He also manufactures custom-made furniture and mirrors, and provides advice on framing. "I can generally see what will look best on a painting very quickly; however, I find it very difficult to analyse this process."

But business is business. Hewitt's real passion now is supporting young and emerging artists in his gallery. With a learned eye for genuine talent and conviction, he admits artists to his stable based on their dedication and new direction in art.

Ben Garrard



Catherine Asquith Gallery, Collingwood Arts Precinct open day 2009. Rina Franz's *Fragmented Narration* installation. Courtesy the artist and Catherine Asquith Gallery.

Collingwood — with its football, nineteenth-century exteriors and bohemian cafe culture — is also becoming known as a gallery hub close to the heart of Melbourne. According to Catherine Asquith, who relocated her gallery from its Flinders Street, CBD location to Collingwood's Oxford Street gallery strip in February this year, the suburb's Collingwood Arts Precinct is a multi-gallery destination.

"In this precinct, my 'neighbours' are all members of the Australian Commercial Galleries Association ... we are all well established with our respective stable of artists and are all well aware of professional courtesy and protocols."

The decision to move came at a time when many galleries were feeling the pinch of tougher economic times. But for Asquith it was less about practicality than opportunity. Knowing that throughout history people have always bought art, the move meant an expansion of her operation to a location she recognised as a growing art gallery district — as a collective, Collingwood Arts Precinct also includes Dickerson Gallery, James Makin Gallery (see *aAR* Issue 19), Port Jackson Press Australia, Lindberg Contemporary Art, Mossenson Galleries and Australian Galleries, all within walking distance of each other.

## Collingwood call



Katherine Boland, *Pumpkin Lane*, 2008, mixed media on timber panel, 120 x 160cm. Courtesy the artist and Catherine Asquith Gallery.

Asquith says she saw an opportunity in Collingwood in place of doom and gloom; an opportunity to be within good company, a stone's throw away from other reputable galleries which, together, would attract buyers to the trendy Melbourne suburb. The new Catherine Asquith Gallery features three separate exhibition spaces with a focus on Australian contemporary art. Asquith looks for "clear and focused direction", in the artists she represents, something she has in common with the other gallery owners of the Collingwood Arts Precinct, who now band together to negotiate tougher economic challenges. "Tough times bring opportunities," said Asquith.

Joseph Brennan

Direct link at [www.artreview.com.au](http://www.artreview.com.au)





### Icons of the Desert

Edited by Roger Benjamin with Andrew C Weislogel  
Herbert F Johnson Museum of Art,  
Cornell University  
ISBN 978-1-934260-07-4  
176 pages  
\$59.95

The competing forces at play in the interstices of this substantial, hardback book are positively tsunamic. For the fate of more than a thousand Papunya boards — the genesis from which contemporary Aboriginal art sprang in 1971 — and our right to view significant public collections at the National Gallery of Victoria and Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory hangs on the outcome.

Right now, nine of the fifty boards originally chosen for display at Cornell University are blacked out in the catalogue — though in the US you get their images in a sealed folder at the back. They are too dangerous for 'us' to see, though whether 'us' means all Australians or only uninitiated Desert men and women is never clearly stated. The decision to take this unprecedented action in contrast to the AGNSW's *Genesis and Genius* catalogue in 2000 and Geoffrey Bardon's magnum opus on Papunya in 2004 — seems to have been that of the Cornell curator Andrew Weislogel. And it's well supported by Australian academic Roger Benjamin in his description of each of the artworks and his book essay.

But then old Papunya hand Dick Kimber's chapter on his commission to seek the views of 'contemporary cultural custodians' rarely seem to justify the black bans in Kimber's eyes.

So the messages from the white interpreters in the book are mixed. It would seem that images removed often contain the paraphernalia of ceremony — hats, tjuringas and bull-roarers — rather than information that is seriously 'maku', or 'dangerous'. Compare Kaapa Tjampitjinpa's *Budgerigar Dreaming (Version 1)* — such an innocent name — with Tim Leura's *Honey Ant Story*. The budgie is banned despite having been commissioned by Geoff Bardon as instructional work for children. The ostensible reason is that two yellow diamond shapes are identified by Bardon as 'Ceremonial hats'. In fact, there may also be material in the four corners of the work representing blood from male initiation rituals — for in the Desert, the bird is a model of wisdom for young Anmatyerre.

Despite these secret-sacred details, Kaapa himself always insisted that the work could be seen by "persons other than properly initiated males". He even appeared in a BBC film with his wife painting such works and telling the film-makers that an uninitiated person viewing them could "no more learn 'im" — that is, comprehend the harmful material.

Meanwhile, fellow Anmatyerre Tim Leura has his *Honey Ant Story* shown in the book with a central ants' nest where, like Ancestor Beings, the ant "comes out of the ground, makes a journey and returns to the ground". In Bardon's view, this is linked to ceremonies and the apparatus associated with them. But at the Stuart Art Centre in Alice Springs — the only place taking Papunya boards for sale in 1971/2 — manager Pat Hogan reinterpreted the work as tjuringas and precise descriptions of the cave where they were stored for Honey Ant ceremonies.

Just the sort of thing that we're not supposed to see and, incidentally, very much the sort of information that led to Charles Mountford's *Nomads of the Desert* being banned by a court in 1975 at the behest of Pitjantjara men, who particularly opposed the sighting of their sacred caves in Mountford's photos.

So, it's a complex and still muddled story. And the consequences of the 'Icons' action in drawing attention to a debate that many had thought played out are yet to be revealed.

Personally, I read detailed descriptions of each work with fascination; then wondered whether the anthropologists were back in charge after twenty-five years of mainly aesthetic appreciation of Aboriginal art. But Northern Territory Arts Minister, former ATSIC Commissioner for the Desert and an artist herself, Alison Anderson has loudly pointed out that all those interpretations are by white people; the next step has to be to define who are the Aboriginal 'contemporary cultural custodians' of these extraordinary works. For it may well be they who decide what 'we' both see and learn in the future.

This catalogue of the Wilkerson Collection of early Papunya boards is touring US university museums through 2009.

Jeremy Eccles



Men's painting room. From left: Uta Uta Jangala, Johnny Warangkula Tjukurrua, Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra. Courtesy The Herald & Weekly Times etc



Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri, *The Honey Ant Story*, 1972, synthetic polymer/powder on composition board, 77.15 x 60.33cm. Collection John and Barbara Wilkerson. Photo courtesy Tony de Camillo for the Herbert F Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University. ©Estate of the artist, by permission of Papunya Tula Artists through the Aboriginal Artists Agency.



# Beware the spoils of time

In 2007, World War II veteran Sergeant Harry Ettlinger described for the US Senate the experience of 'Monument Men'. These were a group of specialists who tracked thousands of culturally significant artworks looted from owners and museums, following the US government's adoption of "a policy to preserve the cultural entities of Europe". Not unlike Michael Ondaatje's 1992 Man Booker-winning *The English Patient*, Ettlinger's speech heralded an almost archaeological need to preserve art from the ravages of war. But art-burgling wartime tyrants are not the only threat to the preservation of art; as art restorer Jim Cobb warns, beware also the ravages of age.

Cobb is owner of Chroma Australia, a company that specialises in the creation of paints to suit the differing needs of both amateur and professional artists — Atelier Interactive is one of his more recent professional inventions. Designed for the art painter and the art restorer, for the restorer, Interactive is the ideal patch-me-up remedy for even the most time-worn of artistic wear. To demonstrate, Cobb shot a before and after of a restoration he'd performed on an unknown oil painting he'd rescued from a thrift shop, whose cracks went back to the gesso layer, making them appear white — not deep enough to require filling. If they had, Cobb's Atelier Modelling Compound would have done the trick.

Available in seventy-five colours, Cobb used Interactive to match the surface colour, wiping away excess paint so that it was only the cracks that were painted over. He followed this up with a solvent-based acrylic varnish (Chroma's Gloss Removable) to help hold the painting together. The advantages of Interactive include slow drying — allowing for much greater workability during the wet to dry transition stage — and its solubility in isopropyl-alcohol means the restorer is working on an area that can be removed later without damaging the original painting. For those interested in



Mike Wintermante **Summer Thunderhead** 2008. Atelier Interactive on canvas. 51 x 61cm  
Courtesy the artist

the conservation of art, Interactive may just be the tool to turn back time on even the most far-gone of paintings.

Joseph Brennan

Direct link at [www.artreview.com.au](http://www.artreview.com.au)

## Now you see it

In 1960, Jean Tinguely's *Homage to New York* partially self-detonated during its tenure at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City. Writing about the work in 1990, American literary critic Michael North argued that *Homage to New York* represented a shift by sculptors to the creation of sculptural objects that were becoming increasingly invisible, immaterial and remote.

Tinguely's "now you see it, now you don't" approach to sculpting couldn't be further removed from the works of Terrance Plowright, a prolific Australian sculptor with an international reputation for creating sculptures to be seen and to stay. "I am hopeful

that my structures, frozen in time, might generate in the viewer a little thinking along the way," said Plowright.

Working on two acres of bushland at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains, Plowright has worked on some of the largest fine art commissions in Australia. Some of his more widely recognised contributions include *Nurturing Nature*, *Profoundly Infinite* relief mural in Parramatta, *Convict Memorial* at Echo Point, Katoomba (of convicts building the Great Western Highway), *Cobar Miner* (a memorial for the Cobar mining community), *Richie Benaud* at the Sydney Cricket Ground and *Dancing Brolga Fountain* at Darling Harbour. "Place and history play an important part in the evolution of my sculptures," said Plowright. "The essence of my work is the desire to capture the driving force of life."

Plowright's current projects include *Celebration of Immigration* at Pyrmont Wharf, Sydney (a nine-figure, larger than life work to commemorate 2008 as the International Year of Immigration, to be installed August 2009), kinetic sculptures across Canberra (to be installed September 2009), *Life Teaming* at Bondi Junction, Sydney (a contemporary sculptural work and light display that uses 2000 pieces of stainless steel and 100 lights — to be installed October 2009), and two sculptural works for Williamstown, Melbourne (to be installed February/March 2010).

Joseph Brennan

Direct link at [www.artreview.com.au](http://www.artreview.com.au)



Terrance Plowright working on **Celebration of Immigration**, 2009, nine cast bronze figures. Courtesy the artist. Photograph by Shirley Plowright





### CAVE ART

Jean Clottes

Phaidon

ISBN 978-0-7148-4592-0

333 pages

RRP \$120

Perhaps the next best thing to wandering through the many subterranean caverns in the south of France is to navigate a path through the majestic volume *CAVE ART*, written by Dr Jean Clottes, a distinguished archaeologist who, until his retirement five years ago, was the scientific adviser on prehistoric art to the French Ministry of Culture.

Clottes, who directed excavations of Palaeolithic and Neolithic sites throughout the region, led a team which, in 1994, researched and documented Chauvet, a Palaeolithic cave in the Ardeche Valley, whose paintings dated to 35,000 years ago — that is to say, considerably older than those of either Lascaux in France or Altamira in Spain and which matched them in quality.

The scale and physical presence of the book hints at the grandeur of its contents before a single page is turned. On opening it, the reader is spun through time to stand at the mouth of a yawning cavern which looks out over an infinite expanse of misted mountains. And from here a steady and fascinating narrative unfolds, taking the reader on a journey from 35,000 to 11,000 years ago — the end of the last ice age. And it's by no means just a European adventure — the book will take us to Patagonia, Borneo, Mexico, India, China and the Kimberly district of Western Australia. Interestingly, Clottes subscribes to the view that our own Aborigines arrived more than 50,000 years ago but that, as yet, techniques have not been developed which can date such engravings as the Australian petroglyphs.

Clottes reminds us that the people who made these paintings and carvings were people just like us "with the same brain, physical appearance, nervous system and cognitive abilities". Were they intentionally making art? Clottes suggests a definition based on the human awareness of being separate from the world which surrounds them. "The forms, techniques and the meanings of art are diverse, but the basic principle remains the same: art is the result of the projection of a strong mental image on the world, in order to interpret and transform reality, and recreate it in a material form."

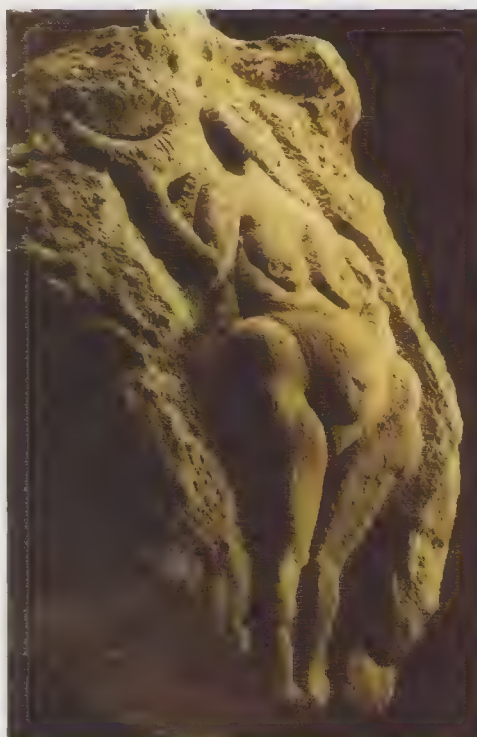
If these are galleries created by the long departed, they also depict the long departed: species no longer with us — the bison, the aurochs (cattle), auks (a type of bird), the mammoths and cave bears. Clottes describes the use of torches and grease lamps whose illumination would have been one fifth of the modern candle, and how the resulting flickering and shadowing would have enhanced the experience of the artists. He discusses pigments: black from either charcoal or manganese dioxide and red from haematite, an iron oxide, and the various techniques for applying them to cave surfaces; and themes which ranged from abstract geometric signs to representations of humans and composite creatures.

The discovery of the Chauvet cave, with its exquisite animals rendered by techniques (spatial perspective and motion) which were thought to have been invented much later, leads to much speculation about what 'art' may have come earlier — much earlier. Works in caves were protected by their environment, but most paintings and engravings were probably made out in the open and exposed to the depredations of the elements over tens of thousands of years. Clottes suggests that it was possible man was making 'art' from his first appearance as *Homo sapiens* 150,000 years ago, but the perishable materials from which they were created (wood, sand and hides) could never have survived. It was at the end of the ice age, suggests Clottes, that the "longest artistic tradition humankind had ever known" drew to a close.

PA



*Fighting rhinoceroses and four horses' heads*, charcoal on rock  
Chauvet Cave, Ardeche, France



*Venus with a Horn*, low relief sculpture on stone, height: 46cm  
Laussel Shelter, Dordogne, France



# Alchemy in Fitzroy Place

Exhibition spaces and ateliers devoted specifically to contemporary jewellery and small crafted objects in metal, stones and acrylics tend to come and go in Sydney, so Metalab, tucked away in Surry Hills, is a substantial commitment to this rewarding area of the arts. Its serene exhibition space and accompanying workshop and studio was established by the metalsmith and designer Cesar Cueva in 2004, and since this time has presented a remarkable series of exhibitions from Australian and New Zealand practitioners.

One of the most arresting aspects of contemporary jewellery is its use of unconventional materials in unexpected combinations — and a more cavalier use of valuable metals than the straightjacket of high-end retail commercial jewellery might permit. Thus the visitor can expect to see a range of jewellery and objects that do not put in an appearance in the generic retail halls of the department stores,



and which might be made of rubber, granite, paper or river stones in conjunction with gold and silver. That said, the studio offers design and manufacturing services and is well equipped to produce prototypes, customised lighting solutions, and corporate gifts and awards.

Two of their most memorable exhibitions came from our New Zealand cousins. *Coast-garde 07 Five Contemporary New Zealand carvers* mounted a show of beautifully hand-carved pendants in green, black and white nephrite jade in 2007, and *Coast-garde 08* also presented pendants and objects carved from agate, jade and other distinctive New Zealand materials such as argillite and greywacke. In fact, New Zealand jewellers have demonstrated a particular affection for jade carving showcased in a remarkable show called *Bone, Stone and Shell*, which toured Australia and South-East Asia in 1988. Among the established contemporary jewellers represented at Metalab are Marcus Foley, Dore Stockhausen, Blanche Tilden and Christopher Robertson.

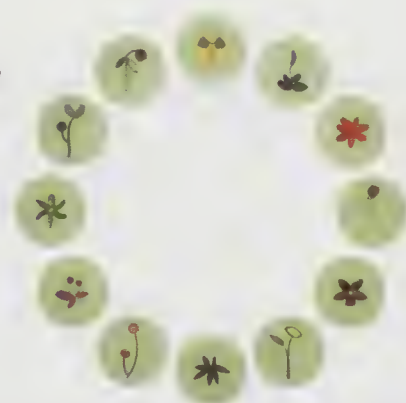
PA

## Off the wall

**Momentum: 18th Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial**

Tamworth, NSW

15 November 2009–18 January 2010



Vicki Mason. **Tinkering with Nature—A Decorative Response**. 2008, hand-dyed PVC, polyester and rayon thread, powder-coated brass, copper and silver, largest: 12 x 6 x 1.2cm. Photograph by Terence Bogue.

Above and below: **Detail of Tinkering with Nature—A Decorative Response**. Photograph by Ian Hobbs.



In 1650, a representative of the Spanish monarch Philip IV made several purchases from a sale of the collection of Charles I of England, who had lost both his throne and his head the year before. Among his acquisitions were fifty-six paintings including a number by Raphael — for which he paid roughly £6000 — and two sets of gold woven tapestry, which alone cost him a similar amount.

Evidently, textile art, which often involved the in-working of precious metals, was a far more valuable medium than oil painting, and achieved its zenith in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Soon after, painting came to be considered a liberal art instead of a manual craft, a shift that would set the course of art history and appreciation to the present. But if textile art is still the victim of a dichotomy established largely on the basis of collectability and practicality (paintings were more easily produced, transported and displayed), then perhaps the balance is beginning to tip the other way.

The Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial has been celebrating contemporary fibre textiles and displaying works from across the nation since the 1970s. Now in its eighteenth instance, entitled *Momentum*, the festival has long been extracting textile art from the marginalised world of craft and championing its right to appreciation in the discourse of art. Put this together with a worldwide trend which is seeing art extricate itself from the confines of canvas, frame and gallery wall and the result is a burgeoning market for art that inhabits a variety of media and exhibition spaces.

*Momentum* is curated by Valerie Kirk and focuses on the influence of new technology on traditional textile practice. It will travel to regional galleries all over the country.

Ben Garrard

Direct link at [www.artreview.com.au](http://www.artreview.com.au)





**Judy Watson blood language**

Judy Watson and Louise Martin-Chew

The Miegunyah Press

ISBN 978-0-522-85658-3

240 pages

RRP \$39.99

## Image and word made seamless

The first time I met Judy Watson we spent some hours looking at slides of her work while she spoke fluently and in detail about the circumstances of their making, sketching word pictures, slide after slide. Listening to her, I could picture her at the British Museum (for example), poring — sketchbook in hand — over the hair, skin and bones of Australian Indigenous peoples from the Gulf of Carpentaria, feeling, thinking, responding with drawings and notes, later distilled into a powerful series of etchings.

On that occasion and during many subsequent discussions, drafting text and at times sending material backward and forward for various small publications, I was struck by the potency of her words, the poetic quality of her language, and the precision and detail with which she directed, not only her artwork but the tenor, tone and timbre of the words which accompanied the paintings, drawings, prints and installations.

Many artists are less focused on these aspects of their practice, but it was no surprise when Judy's mother, Joyce Watson (also an artist), told me that Judy excelled at English as a schoolgirl. Words, but also the research that may direct her practice and inform many of her most powerful works, are an integral part of the way that Judy Watson creates.

*Judy Watson blood language* reflects this holistic approach. From the initial proposal of the book in early 2008, it was approached as much as an artist's book as a monograph, albeit one which would inform and showcase Judy's work over recent years. Its purpose from the beginning was to let the images tell the story, but to give these images context with the artist's own voice about her inspiration and thoughts during the making.

The book required an exhaustive search of Judy's records and archives for the significant images of the last fifteen years, and a sifting and editing of the words that she herself, and others (who include most of the eminent visual art writers in Australia), have penned to date. Watson's peripatetic life — she has lived in Townsville, Tasmania, Sydney, Darwin, Brisbane, and travelled extensively overseas — has mitigated against seamless records. The themes were established early, and works grouped in categories which themselves have been fluid: water, skin, poison, dust and blood, ochre, bones and driftnet. These themes, and their amorphous nature, allowed the type of journey on which the images and their words could embark. The experience of the book is rather like viewing one of Judy's loosely hung canvases. There is empathy, emotion, a seductive process which cloaks its subject matter and its often political message like a Trojan horse.

My prologue and epilogue provide a secondary voice, a companion guide to Judy's life and work journey, and are echoed in the short introductions to each theme. At its heart and in its form and expression, however, this is Judy's book: her vision, which informed that of the designer, her words and her images. She continues to be a tour de force within contemporary Australian art, with blood language her newest vehicle and emissary.

Louise Martin-Chew



Judy Watson. **big wet**. 1999, ink, pastel and acrylic on coloured cotton. 179 x 108cm



Judy Watson. **hollow trace**. 2000, artichoke liquid, pigment, ink and pastel on canvas. 187 x 153cm



**Ancestral power and the aesthetic: Arnhem Land paintings and objects from the Donald Thomson Collection**

Ian Potter Museum of Art  
University of Melbourne  
Melbourne

2 June–23 August 2009

# A lifetime's pursuit showcased



Artist unknown. Attributed to Djambarrpuyngu clan, Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, **Marrnggitj (Doctor/Clever Man) and Kalka (Sorcerer)** c. 1937 natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 74 x 72cm. The Donald Thomson Collection University of Melbourne and Museum Victoria.

Despite initially lacking the burst of popularity that was generated for Indigenous artists working on canvas, bark painting now enjoys a revered place in Australian art history. Works on bark, both rich in meaning and aesthetically striking, have taken their place in collections around Australia and the world.

The late Professor Donald Thomson played a prominent part in bringing this artistic phenomenon to the attention of an urban audience. His travels and studies in central and eastern Arnhem Land in the 1930s and 1940s contributed to the interest in this unique art form by keen collectors and a prosperous market. He purchased many bark paintings from the Yolngu people as a way of collecting and transporting the images he saw in cave and rock shelter paintings.

These works, together with Thomson's photographs and footage, form the Donald Thomson Collection, from which thirty-two paintings, never before exhibited together, have been selected for the exhibition *Ancestral power and the aesthetic* at the Ian Potter Museum of Art.

The main purpose of bark paintings was didactic, as shown by Luke Taylor in his essay *From Rock to Bark — Art from Western Arnhem Land*. He notes that although bark artists, such as Yirawala and Ivan Namirrkki, expected to be paid for their work, the fundamental motivation was to educate people about the power of ancestral subjects and the importance of the land to spiritual sustenance. One instructive bark painting that Donald Thomson received in 1935 from legendary Djapu leader Wonggu is a focal point of the exhibition. The work, displayed alongside field notes, and photographs of its creation taken by Thomson, is a powerful symbol of the desire both to acquire cultural knowledge and to disseminate it.

John von Sturmer, a fellow of the Institute of Postcolonial Studies in Melbourne,

believes bark paintings can be viewed as "little doorways one can enter, into a home, a living space, a space of belief and attachments and cautions. They are demonstrations of ways of being and thinking."

An engagement with bark paintings is therefore not simply an aesthetic venture, but a gaining of insight into ancient ideas about man's relationship with nature. Bark paintings have accordingly ceased to be regarded as primitive, ethnographic objects and are collected internationally as cultural manifestos and fine art objects, most recently by the Musée du quai Branly in Paris.

Across different territories and language groups, bark paintings display a vast semantic and stylistic diversity, from the figurative to the abstract. Some works draw on the sacred patterns used in body painting during ceremonial dances while others constitute musical notation, visually stimulating the recall of sounds associated with ceremony or daily activity. In some regions animals are depicted in the famous X-ray style, showing vital organs and food cuts, while in others they are adorned with *minyitji*, or marks, to designate them as ancestral creator beings.

The Donald Thomson Collection comprises works by the Yolngu people of eastern Arnhem land. The region is known for its fine cross-hatching, a technique made famous by David Malangi Daymiringu, whose work was appropriated without permission by the Australian government for use on the former one-dollar note.

Ben Garrard  
Direct link at [www.artreview.com.au](http://www.artreview.com.au)



Wonggu Mununggurr (with sons, Maama, Mawunpuy and Natjyalma)  
Djapu clan, Eastern Arnhem Land, Northern Territory **Djapu minytji (Djapu clan design)** 1942, natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 189.4 x 105.2cm. The Donald Thomson Collection. University of Melbourne and Museum Victoria.



Attributed to Makani Wilingarr  
Mildjingi clan, Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory **Karnda Karnda dhaawu (Sacred Dog story)**, 1937, natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 138 x 65cm. The Donald Thomson Collection. University of Melbourne and Museum Victoria. © Courtesy Jimmy Burinyila.



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Photo: © David Perry (date)

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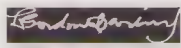


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Curator: Peter Clark

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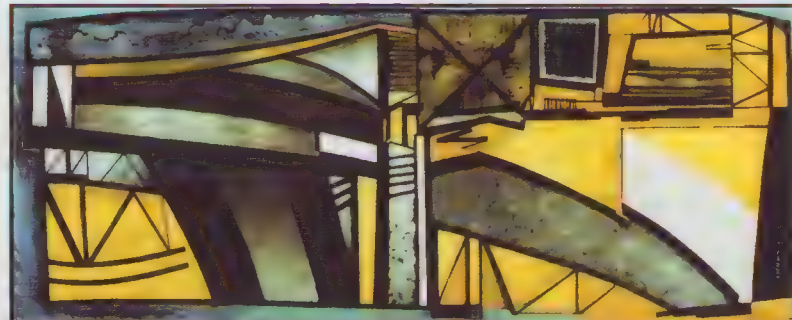
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# University collections Queensland

A museum of one's own? JEREMY ECCLES discovers how it happened to William Robinson in August this year.



William Robinson, *Bedroom with woman putting on lipstick* 1977, gouache and coloured pastels, 76 x 56.5cm. Purchased 1977 with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council. Queensland University of Technology Art Collection Brisbane. Photo Carl Warner

Albert Tucker has a study centre, Whiteley a studio. Nolans can be found out of Canberra at Lanyon, Boyds out of Nowra at Bundanon, and Pro Hart, Ken Done and Billich have each established their own eponymous tributaries. But William Robinson is surely the first Australian artist to have a whole public gallery devoted to his life and work.

The project by the Queensland University of Technology is a sesquicentenary effort which has also involved restoring Old Government House — that state's first public building, hard by the Botanical Gardens and the river in central Brisbane — to its own sesquicentennial glory.

Bill Robinson will have the seven-room top floor for the display of some of the 120 artworks in the QUT Collection, plus some of the artefacts of his seventy-three-year long life, including a palette with an amazing seven-year encrustation of paint built up on it.

I wrote recently in *aAR* about the emergence, blinking into the light of university art collections across the country. But nowhere

else did I discover such a huge collection devoted to a single artist. How did the William Robinson Gallery come about? Robinson had a thirty-five-year association with QUT and its predecessor institutions — like Kedron Teachers College where he studied and had his first show, from which the college bought its first painting in 1967. They've been buying — and Robinson has been donating paintings and his complete print archive — ever since.

Not that Bill Robinson "became himself", in his own words, until about 1989, in his fifties. That was the end result of "a rough and difficult ride to reach my own style" as he made a priority of earning a living to support his family with six children, struggled not to influence his pupils with his own style and painted only at the ends of days of such struggle. It didn't help that his own training in the 1950s had been quite devoid of Modernism — "to the extent that I even needed to discover Cézanne and van Gogh. I found Bonnard in a book in the early 1960s and immediately thought that the colour really appealed to me." A further factor was his progression from inner Brisbane via a fringe farm at Birkdale to the wilds of Beechmont and Springbrook which would form the subject of his greatest work — work which would take him well into the 1980s.

"I have to live in the world of my subject," Robinson explained to me at his last full one-man show at the Philip Bacon Galleries in Brisbane. Not that he's unhappy that the early suburban Bonnardian pictures or the quirky farmyards in between which reveal his fondness for animals and his recognition of the frailty of man — or woman, in the person of his wife Shirley —





Opposite: William Robinson, *Self-portrait for town and country* 1991, hand-coloured lithograph, 38 x 56.5cm. Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002. QUT Art Collection Brisbane. Photo Carl Warner.

will hang beside the mighty and mountainous rainforest works.

"When we moved up to Beechmont, we became Adam and Eve in that primal landscape. But we moved out [of the pictures] in the 1990s, leaving only nature — and we haven't been back! The grandeur's still there, and the mysticism. And my recent works at Carnarvon Gorge [in Central Queensland] might just reflect the presence of Indigenous life. There's something in the air there; an overwhelming sacredness in the rocks ... like medieval cathedrals."

Sid Nolan once told me he felt an Aboriginal absence in many of his desert paintings. But a Bill Robinson wouldn't be recognisable without its tangle of trees — often described as seen through a fish-eye lens. That's not a description the artist is comfortable with. "Complex perspective' is how I prefer to see it. My trees are not upside down. It's just that my eye has moved with the compass and with the clock to different planes — like a bird flying around the picture — trying to find ways of putting it all together within the history of landscape painting. It's like Cubism, where the eye moves round an object, though that tends to remain horizontal."

I wondered whether Robinson had in mind either a child's-eye view from lying on the ground, or a god's-eye view looking down on his creation. "That's a bit poetic for me," responded the man who mocked the Archibald by painting himself with geese and cows and astride a farm horse in a satire of Goya's portrait of Charles IV — but still won the prize twice. "Though maybe there's something of the innocence of the child in my floating free?"

His own musical, rather than poetic, explanation appears in Lou Klepac's monograph (there are two others) where Robinson cross-referenced his perspective to "Bach organically arranging the construction [of his fugues] to suit the needs of the complete composition. His subjects are interconnected with sequences and layer on layer of key modulations. They can be inverted, augmented, diminished and fragmented."

And why wouldn't Robinson use music as a point of reference, given that he almost became a professional pianist and still plays for two hours each day to shuck off "the ordinariness of the everyday" before starting to paint. "It wouldn't be bad to view my paintings accompanied by the music I listened to while painting them," he suggests. "Music takes you to a freedom in the mind so the painting can reveal itself."

"And I'd like the feelings in my work to communicate — things like the fragility of the Earth. Contemporary art seems to avoid issues other than 'art' issues. Surely the most important thing today is what sort of world we're going to leave our children and grandchildren. There is no alternative." Perhaps this is a reading that Bill Robinson would like Therese Rein, who launched his new gallery, to take back home with her!

There's no doubt that Robinson is unfazed by the honour being accorded to him. "Do I deserve this? I've



William Robinson *William, Josephine and others* 1982–83 oil on canvas, 122 x 183.5cm. Purchased 1984. QUT Art Collection, Brisbane. Photo Carl Warner



William Robinson *Eagle landscape* 1987, oil on canvas, 141 x 192cm. QUT Art Collection. Purchased 1991 through the Vice-Chancellor's Special Initiatives Fund. Photo Carl Warner

never really worried about it; though I was surprised when Brian Johns originally suggested this use for Old Government House. But it is perfect to have my paintings lasting, to have a permanent presence in Brisbane. I do feel a need to show future generations what I've done — it's a bit like one of my favourite museums, the Marmottan in Paris."

No ego problems there. The Marmottan houses the world's largest collection of Monets! "It's nice to go to one building to see a lot of art by one artist," suggested Stephen Rainbird, the man whose job will be to build the collection, choose the annual hanging, contextualise Bill with other landscape artists, advance the Robinson legacy to art education in Queensland with the works of his pupils, and develop "a dynamic public program".

aar



# The world's oldest palimpsest

**PATRICIA ANDERSON** looks at the dilemma of preserving Indigenous petroglyphs while pursuing energy resources.



Above: Thylacine (Tasmanian tiger), extinct on the Australian mainland 3500-4000 years ago. Burrup site

Below: Fish carving, Burrup site, date unknown.



A parcel of land in North Western Australia has been the scene of conflicting passions for some time now. It concerns the preservation of the remains of a 240-square-kilometre area — a stone-age site known to the Aboriginal people as Murujuga, formerly called the Dampier Archipelago and now called the Burrup Peninsula which, it has been agreed, contains the most extensive concentration of rock carvings (petroglyphs) to be found anywhere in the world.

In 2003, the World Monuments Fund, a body which draws the public's attention to culturally irreplaceable sites which are threatened by neglect, vandalism and other depredations, placed it on its register of '100 most endangered sites' — a first for any Australian archaeological site. And while it was nominated for the National Heritage List by Robert Bednarik, the President of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations, many works, numbering in the thousands, had already been destroyed.

The antiquity of the Burrup site — whose rock engravings, it has been suggested, may be as old as 30,000 years — strikes us most clearly when we consider that Britain

only became an island around 8500 years ago. And a thousand years after this, the Mediterranean Sea gushed into the depression we now know as the Black Sea (which may have given rise to the biblical stories of the great flood and Noah's ark — such was the devastation in the area). And as such, they straddle that period on earth when much of mankind made the transition from hunter-gatherer to farmer.

Everything hinges on how much we value antiquity and the human imperatives that link its creations to our modern world. Some of these carvings, if they do indeed date to 28,000 BC, were produced a little later than the more sophisticated carved and painted images in the caves of Chauvet, and thousands of years earlier than those of Lascaux and Altamira. They are a palimpsest of the spiritual, the ritualised, hopeful talismans for the hunt, and even ordinary graffiti, with which every suburban train user will have some association.

There are carvings of the thylacine (the Tasmanian tiger), eagles, emus, marine creatures, ancient species of fat-tailed kangaroo, seabirds, and Aboriginal ceremonies. Further, the site has a great layering of archaeologically interesting objects. To quote from the Burrup organisation's website, it contains "camp sites, quarries and shell middens ... Many motifs and some stone features are connected to the beliefs and ceremonial practices of Aboriginal people in the Pilbara region today. The entire Archipelago is a



continuous cultural landscape providing a detailed record of both sacred and secular life reaching from the present back into the past, perhaps to the first settlement of Australia." Friends of Australian Rock Art (FARA) believe that the site may have the first representation of the human face, but this may be wishful thinking.

Burrup had the misfortune to be located near a natural gas field and construction by the Northwest Shelf Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry has been a presence for some fifty years, so debate centres on what can best be done with the remaining carvings, which originally numbered in the millions.

Rio Tinto, which holds leases over part of the peninsula, has become increasingly involved with heritage concerns and retains staff and advisers, including archaeologist Ken Mulvaney, who is President of the Australian Rock Art Research Association, to negotiate with Indigenous people over these matters. Woodside Petroleum appears to be more interested in the 'Gordian knot' approach and has agreed to work around the site; and where this is deemed impractical, will relocate those rocks with carvings, in close consultation with the Indigenous communities.

In July 2008, the World Archaeology Congress, held in Dublin, and attended by 1800 archaeologists, called on the Australian government to protect the carvings and engravings threatened by Woodside Petroleum's and the Western Australian government's proposed natural gas production facility which would diminish the sites against the wishes of the site's custodians.

Nicholas Rothwell's essay 'Culture Clash' for *The Australian* (14 March 2009) gave a good account of the depredations. In the late 1960s, a rail line for iron ore was constructed, and a port and town were built on Burrup's seaward edge. By 1980, Woodside's North West Shelf Project had commenced. Rothwell notes: "The fate of Burrup's rock art was not a big factor in those first chapters of the region's transformation, even though the extent of the peninsula's spectacular engravings was known early on."

Ironies abound. Woodside Petroleum has called its natural gas complex Pluto. Pluto is derived from the Greek word *ploutos*, meaning wealth, and the Romans added the Greek god Pluto to their own pantheon as a god of the underworld, presumably because in the ancient world wealth was associated with metals and metal came from the underground.

And Burrup was an island, separated from the mainland by a narrow strait until the late 1960s saw a causeway constructed. Thus we can assume that rising sea levels — some 30 metres — around 6500 BC would have submerged much of the ancient rock art, just as it separated mainland Australia from New Guinea and Tasmania.

It has been argued that to move any of the carvings diminishes the chances of interpreting their overall



Left: Emu tracks, Burrup site, date unknown.

Below: Arch face carving, date unknown, Burrup site.



Below: Wader bird and crab carving, date unknown, Burrup site.



significance, as the carvings were never intended to be experienced in isolation but as a web of stories and ceremonies through the centuries. Further, apart from the industrial enterprises, the site is also exposed to vandals, although it could be argued where graffiti is concerned, those who scratch their own designs and initials into the rock surfaces are merely adding to the oldest palimpsest in the world.

Some good news emerged in a tiny item in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 26 March 2009. Called 'All clear for rock art', it reported that a monitoring project over the last four years had found no evidence that industrial emissions were harming the rock art. Perhaps if these carvings survived the last ice age they can survive the multinationals.



Above: Kangaroo carving, upended some thousands of years ago, Burrup site.





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## Territorial

12-29 August 2009

By Eugenia Lim

A multi-media, of video work that explores themes of territory, place and identity.



## John and Betty

7-24 October 2009

By Marjol O'Brien, Miriam Porter, Madeleine McCrista, Catherine Casar

A humorous deconstruction of the original John and Betty books.



## Horror, Come Darkness 24 September – 11 November

Curators: Rhonda Dawkins and John Potts

Horror, Come Darkness explores the genre of horror as an emotional state for its encapsulating effects of fear, suspense and the irrational where the manifestation of darkness can transform reality into the threatening, the unknown, the unknown and the inevitable.

The exhibition will feature contemporary artists using cinematic effects, literary sources and technological innovation, painting, video, installation, video and sound will be used as devices for effecting the simulation of horror.

Macquarie University Art Gallery

20 August – 18 September  
Raft: *The Drifting Border*

Curator: Rod Pattenden

During recent years in Australia the social, political and economic circumstances of Australian culture have changed considerably. The concept of migration and indeed the Australian idea of the coast have taken on a new meaning by Government attitudes and policy.

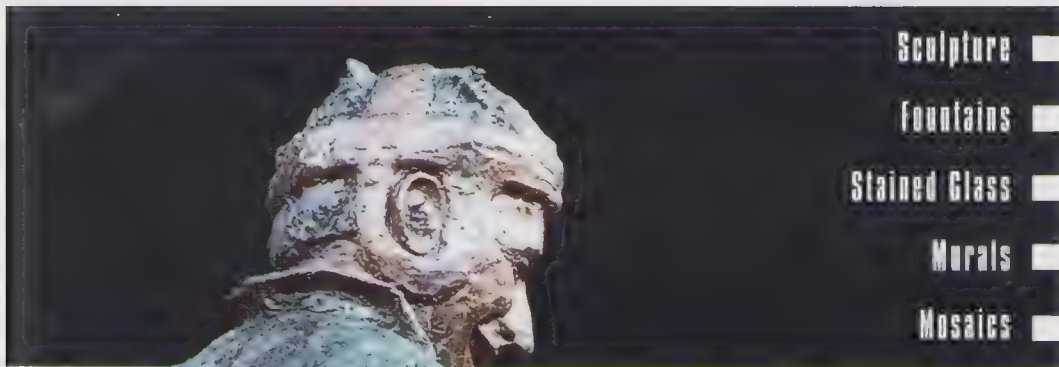
These changes to Australia and the shift in its identity and social fabric have been a catalyst for a series of work by artist Stephen Copland, which involve the appropriation of Theodore Gericault's famous painting, *The Raft of the Medusa*.



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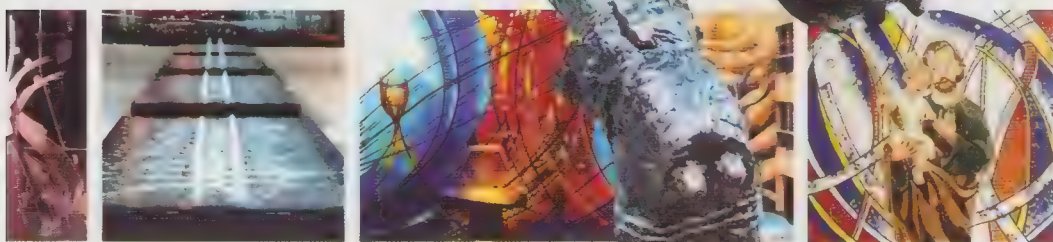
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Alan Lloyd, former head conservator, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

**Last year, head conservator Alan Lloyd retired from the Art Gallery of New South Wales after a forty-five-year career there. *aAR*'s editor asks him about this marathon.**

## Alan Lloyd

*Patricia Anderson:* You were there at the gallery for the so-called 'Boustead' years?

*Alan Lloyd:* Yes. The year I arrived was 1963. I grew up at Wangi on Lake Macquarie. And a local friend of my family's was Dobell. He used to come sometimes and chat over the fence, and go home with a boot full of plants from the garden. One day my mum said: "My son likes to draw, what do you suggest he does with it"? Dobell: "Tell him to come down and I'll have a talk to him." So I did. I had an afternoon where he pulled

out sketchbooks and paintings from under the bed and from around his studio, saying: "You have to draw every day and you have to go to art school."

*PA:* Art School in Newcastle?

*AL:* Yes, and when I was there I asked the teacher what sort of work I could do in the arts arena. He said: "Well, if you become an art teacher like me, you become an art teacher in order to paint, because you have to support your art." He also suggested commercial art, but warned me that most of the commercial art companies hired talented young girls because they were only on two-thirds of the basic wage. Then he said: "I know this guy who comes up from Sydney. He's a conservator, he comes up to check works once a year which are on loan to the Town Hall from the Art Gallery of New South Wales."

*PA:* And that's how you met Bill Boustead?

*AL:* Yes. He suggested I contact the art gallery to find out if I could become a restorer — which I did. And when he realised that our family knew Dobell, Boustead recalled his involvement in salvaging the Dobell portrait of his friend Joshua Smith, which had been badly burnt in a fire.

*PA:* And then you found yourself in Sydney?

*AL:* When I arrived, I saw that Boustead was a multi-talented and very practical guy. He asked me about my background experience. I said I'd been to art school and a technical high school where I did woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing — and I helped my dad pull down a house and rebuild it. Boustead said: "You're the one I want — you've got manual skills and a flair for art."

*PA:* A good combination.

*AL:* He said: "I've tried to get another conservator here but there's nowhere in Australia where conservators are trained. We can't entice people from overseas



Malgorzata Zawicki restoring a frame.





Margaret Lawlor, restoring a frame. Peter

because the salary is not good enough, so I've got permission from the public service to take on a couple of apprentices." One of those apprentices had recently left so I started as a cadet restorer in 1963.

PA: When you arrived, what sort of place did you find?

AL: Well, there was the grand façade. You can imagine what it was like for a country kid coming from Wangi — where there wasn't even a two-storey house. The biggest high-rise in Sydney at the time was the AMP building at Circular Quay.

PA: What about the conservation facilities?

AL: The Art Gallery of New South Wales was a leader in conservation in Australia — having had full-time conservators since 1899. At that time, a lot of Victorian paintings in the collection were flaking and cracking, thanks to poor painting techniques

PA: Did you find yourself in a single room for restoration? Was there much space allocated?

AL: In 1932, they had built a conservation department at the back of the gallery. It was upstairs. It had a paper conservation room, a paintings conservation room, a dark room, a room for looking at things in the dark under ultraviolet light and a storeroom. And underneath this was a carpenter's workshop and a paint shop

PA: Most impressive for those early years — and how long had Boustead been there?

AL: Boustead had started in 1946 after the war. He was repatriated from the army and started as a technician, doing picture frames and the like. At that stage the current conservator had become an alcoholic — he was drinking the alcohol rather than cleaning the paintings with it! "Take early retirement," the gallery said.

PA: What happened next?

AL: They tried to get another conservator from



Simon Ives treating Rupert Bunny's *A Summer Morning*. For a forthcoming exhibition

overseas, but the salary wasn't good enough. The National Library sent a cadet here and the Art Advisory Board sent a conservator to train him.

PA: What constituted the basics of conservation in those days, when confronted with a work where the paint was flaking off?

AL: Firstly, the trustees found money. They tried and tried to get money from the government for





Stewart Laider, head curator of paintings, retouching Jean Portael's *Esther*

equipment and couldn't. So they did fundraising. And Bousted suggested: "Well — they've got this and that at the Courtauld Institute." So the trustees bought microscopes and ultraviolet equipment, and whatever else was necessary. It was pretty well set up in line with what was current internationally at the time.

PA: What does ultraviolet light do?

AL: Ultraviolet shows up more recent additions to a picture. For example, if someone had an unsigned painting and they wrote a name on it, it would show up. It's like when you go to a bank and they put your signature under a black light. It shows you all the retouching.

PA: The gallery had rising damp for a time, didn't it?

AL: Yes, and when the Florence floods happened in 1966, the Department of Foreign Affairs sent Bousted to Italy to set up a conservation lab — he'd had experience of mould growth at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The collection store was under the gallery and there was no air conditioning. In his book *They Kill you in the End*, a former director, Hal Missingham, described the endless petitioning of the government to secure air conditioning for the building. In Bousted's time they finally built a dehumidifier to dry the building out.

PA: Tell me about the earliest paintings you worked on?

AL: Well, I worked on so many. One I *didn't* work on was Edouard Detaille's *Vive L'Empereur*. It was damaged in 1953 and work on it was underway around 2003. It had once been on display but, because of the war, it got taken down to storage.

PA: All that sabre rattling ...

AL: Yes.

PA: Moving from an artwork to a frame ... what is the difference between cold gilding and hot gilding?

AL: No. There's water gilding and oil gilding. In water gilding the adhesive is basically like gelatine, so it's water soluble. Oil gilding is solvent based. So water gilding is that really, really fine result where the gold gets highly burnished. When you do water gilding you have a burnisher, and you actually burnish the gold leaf and it makes it really shine.

PA: How do you apply the gold leaf to the surface?

AL: You start with your wooden frame which you then put a plaster layer on. Then if there's any decoration it is moulded in plaster gesso and attached. Over this you put a red ground (something like an ochre). And finally when the gold is applied, you get a certain warmth through the burnished gold.

PA: And what form does the gold take?

AL: It comes in squares — light as a feather. You have a little brush which you wipe on your hair to get static electricity, as you would with a comb. You pick up a sheet of gold leaf, and you flow it onto the moistened surface. You have to hold your breath when you lay it, otherwise it will blow away. When it dries you burnish it. And the burnisher is a wooden handle with an agate shaped like a dog's tooth.

PA: It's lovely when you see the pattern made by the squares when they meet.

AL: In fact, that's bad gilding! You should never see the joins. The edges of the gold squares overlap and if you don't burnish, you get a double thickness of gold. Usually when you see joins like that, it's oil gilding.

PA: And that is?

AL: Oil gilding is matte gilding. Where it's done properly, the flat areas of a frame are left matte, and the decorative highlights — the projections of the frame — receive a burnishing.

PA: Was this some special fashion?

AL: Those Victorian frames were made before electric lights. You had gas lights or candlelight. So details were exaggerated to give them a truly three-dimensional quality. Now we get a lot of complaints from the public, saying the frames are too glitzy.

PA: The public didn't live in the gas age. Tell me about the eccentricities of certain paintings you've worked on?

AL: Well, every picture is a challenge in its own way. Every artist is an individual. There's no guarantee an artist has stuck to the original set of materials. They tend to ... sometimes ... adapt things. Suppose a painter wants to achieve a 'Drysdale-like' picture, they can put red boot polish over the top.

PA: And later they might have forgotten they used it

AL: Yes.



PA: What are the most unusual materials and substances applied to surfaces you have come across when restoring a work?

AL: Well, it's more likely to happen with contemporary art. When *Blue Poles* appeared, people were saying contemporary art isn't going to last" [physically] There was one work that worried me a bit. Brett Whiteley had just won the Archibald with his self-portrait — the one with him looking at himself in a hand mirror. There was a great swag of Brett's hair on it. I said, "if someone souvenirs that we've got to get some more ...". After he died, we found he'd kept envelopes full of hair for future use.

And we had an American pop art exhibition here. There was a painting with a figure holding a Coke bottle, and some sixteen-year-old kid said: "That Coke bottle's wrong — it's the wrong period." So we contacted the curator who said: "Yes, someone stole the original and we substituted another Coke bottle." So this is the situation with contemporary art where more off-beat materials are used.

PA: How have paints and their constituents changed over the years?

AL: Well, originally artists made their own. Then in the early nineteenth-century, Windsor and Newton started making paint in commercial quantities. The next development was probably in Depression times, when artists like George Finey started painting with household enamels because he couldn't get oils. Sidney Nolan started using Ripolin [a translucent enamel paint] because Picasso was using it.

PA: And after that?

AL: After Ripolin came the early acrylics, then they brought out an alkyd paint which was an amalgam of water and oil-based materials.

PA: How do you feel about your forty-five-year marathon? Since the 1970s you've been directing a talented team of restorers and conservators, and you've had occasions to travel abroad to supervise the installation and care of works, or to bring back some treasure or other.

AL: Well, we've been a family here: happy times, sad times, we've all been very much in each other's lives — through births, deaths and marriages. I've worked with three directors: Missingham, Laverty and Capon. I've survived three extensions to the gallery building, with a lot of thumping and bumping and the consequence of that is that I've worked in three different conservation departments — it seems my life has been governed by the number three. **BAR**



Simon varnishing the Rupert Bunny

The paper laboratory



Lloyd's work has taken him around the world. In 1953, he accompanied the 11th World of Australian Maritime painting to China, and in August last year, Lloyd was sent to Zurich to bring back a second voyage — a work by Paul Gauguin's *Goldsmith in Mirror*.





Preservation Foundation Watercolour after stain removal.

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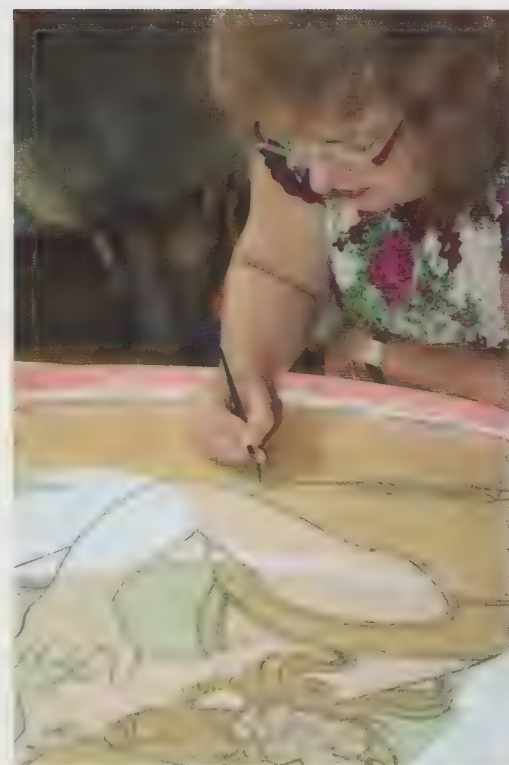
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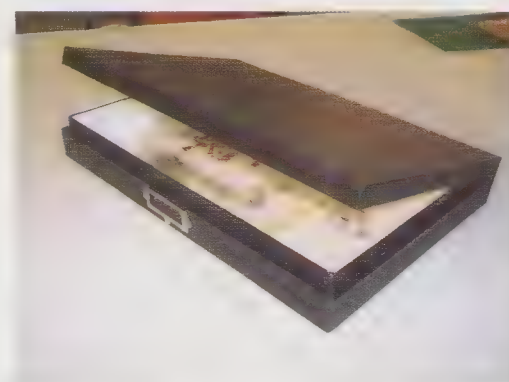


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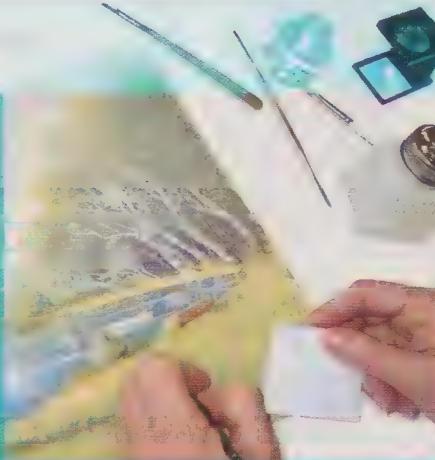
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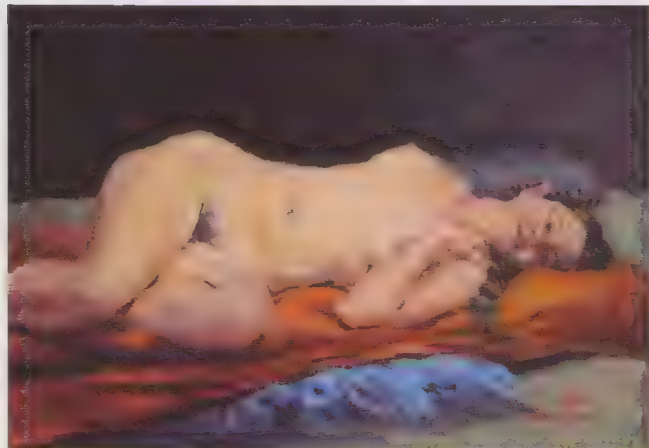
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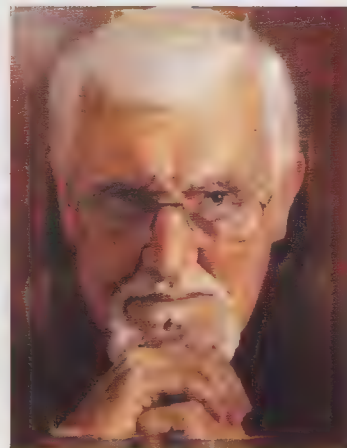
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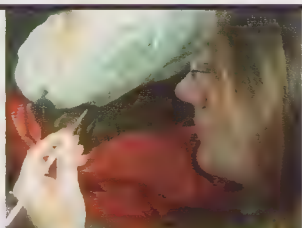
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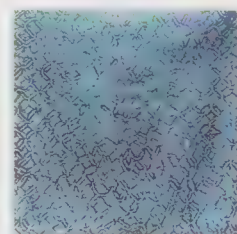
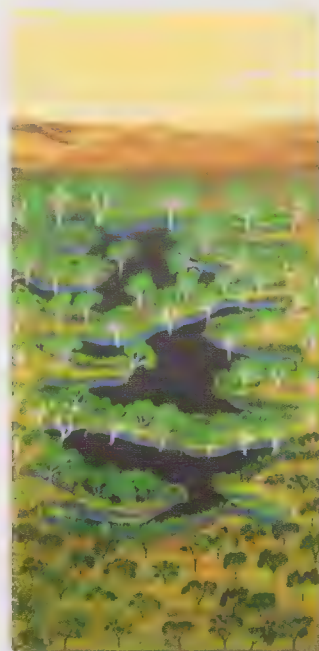


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# The accidental gallery owner

**ANNEMARIE LOPEZ**  
discovers how  
artist Christopher  
Hodges found  
himself running one  
of Australia's most  
highly regarded  
Aboriginal art  
spaces.

"The gallery was an accident," says Christopher Hodges. Thoughtful, quietly spoken, but with the hint of a twinkle in his eye, Hodges explains: "I was, and still describe myself first and foremost as, an artist." In 1988, he was trying to make a living from his art, while teaching at schools and lecturing at the College of Fine Arts in Sydney, when he was asked to sell some artwork on behalf of the Utopia community.

"The work was lovely," says Hodges of the new batik work from the Aboriginal women artists. "No one had seen anything like it at the time in Sydney. It was relatively easy to introduce high-quality work to interested people

who liked art." Hodges' associates from the contemporary art world snapped up the pieces. "Even my mum bought one."

While his early foray into the world of art dealing came easily, he describes the next exhibition he organised for the Utopia artists as hard work. "In those days the words 'contemporary Aboriginal art' were new." We introduced contemporary Aboriginal art into the contemporary art world. We weren't trying to sell to traditional Aboriginal art collectors. We showcased the work as contemporary art rather than 'tribal' or 'ethnic' art. "We weren't selling hundred-year-old boomerangs or ancient arts and crafts, but great pictures painted by artists who were alive and working today."

Today, Utopia Art Sydney represents a small group of Australian artists, including leading members of the Papunya Tula art community, Gloria Petyarre from Utopia and non-Indigenous artists from Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra — including John R Walker, Tony Coleing and Marea Gazzard. Hodges prides himself on representing all the artists equally, and credits this approach with the success of the gallery.

In the early days of Utopia Art, he started visiting the remote Indigenous communities where the artwork was being made. "On my first attempt, we had one of the biggest floods ever in Alice Springs in the Easter of 1988, so we didn't make it." But he soon got a taste of the desert and came to know the people who lived there. "The artists were like artists anywhere," says Hodges, "they had a love for their work and a joy in finding that other people were interested in it and understood it." But the communities themselves were impoverished, lacking transport, public health and employment opportunities, so the leading artists like Emily Kngwarreye became great providers for their community.

In 1989, Hodges tried to organise exhibitions with other more established Sydney galleries but found that their agendas clashed with his. He realised he needed to concentrate on his own gallery space and by the middle of 1989 Utopia Art opened for three days a week. After a while he



George Tjungurrayi, *Untitled*, 2004, acrylic on linen, 153 x 122cm. Courtesy the artist and Utopia Gallery



"reluctantly" opened four days a week — then five.

The first Utopia Art Gallery was on Parramatta Road, Stanmore, in Sydney's inner west. "A most remote location," says Hodges, which art dealer Ray Hughes once described as "more of a corridor than a gallery". Hodges agrees it was very small, but it had a very big stockroom. "We did some terrific shows there. People still talk about some of the major pieces we sold in that little gallery." Some of the works eventually ended up in the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery of Australia.

When he started in the gallery business, Hodges turned to galleries like Watters and Coventry as role models. He liked the way the Coventry Gallery gave opportunities to young artists, but felt they were less successful with mid-career artists, and learned some useful lessons about how to handle them differently. He also credits James Mollison, a former director of the National Gallery, as a big influence on his life. "As a young artist he helped Helen (Hodges' partner) and I enormously. We used to visit Canberra regularly and look at the exhibitions he curated."

Hodges says that selling works by Indigenous artists hasn't always been easy, and he's been disheartened at times by the number of people who start selling Aboriginal artists' work without any knowledge or interest in the art itself. There have been many people trying to cash in on Indigenous art, he says, and it's a shame that it has diminished the careers of some very promising artists. Hodges is proud of the way Utopia Art has always encouraged fresh artworks and enthusiastic artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Some, like John R Walker and Marea Gazzard, have been with him since the early days. "We've never run the gallery like a shop," says Hodges. "We've always been more successful at running shows that resemble museum exhibitions." Hodges likes to present exhibitions that showcase what an artist can do. The commercial side is important to him because this is what allows the artist to keep producing art, but he says that the selling side of things happens as much in the backroom as in the gallery space. For him the exhibitions themselves are a time for people to learn about the art and to see how good an artist can be, rather than just a sales opportunity. "It's probably been my failing," he smiles.

In 2001, an opportunity arose for Utopia Art to move to a larger gallery space in Danks Street, Waterloo, a thriving post-industrial area south of Sydney's centre that soon filled with cafes, providores and other galleries. The warehouse at 2 Danks Street now houses ten galleries, but Hodges seems pleased that Utopia Art was one of the first. "We opened a month before everyone else, when the rest of the place was still being built — which was fun!"

He talks about the artists he has worked with. "It's really been a privilege to show some great artists. There are very few people who can say that they exhibited Emily Kngwarreye, Gloria Petyarre, Kathleen Petyarre and Ada Bird before most people even knew who they were. Their work needed to be shown in a certain way — as contemporary art — and we did that."



John R Walker **La Nina** 2006, acrylic on polyester, 160 x 434 cm. Courtesy the artist and Utopia Gallery.



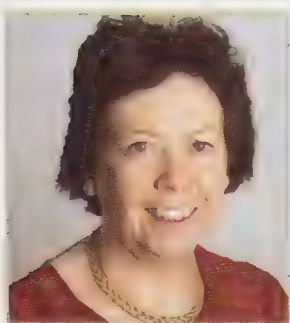
Ronnie Tjampirirpa **Untitled** 2004, acrylic on linen, 183 x 244 cm. Courtesy the artist and Utopia Gallery.



Warrimpirringa Tjapaltjarri **Untitled**, 2006, acrylic on linen, 183 x 244 cm. Courtesy the artist and Utopia Gallery.



A series in which curators, artists, gallery directors and writers choose and discuss five works which have some special significance for them.



Jackie Menzies, Head Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, discusses works for which she has a special affection.

## Court lady, Tang dynasty, c.618–906

Tang dynasty China, a period of unexcelled wealth and glory, still lives through the surviving repertoire of tomb furniture (*mingqi*). While generally tomb figures were made from moulds, the better ones were finished and coloured by hand. For any collection, an ideal *mingqi* is one modelled on the infamous, beautiful courtesan Yang Gueifei with whom Emperor Ming Huang became infatuated. Yang Gueifei's full, rounded figure, well exemplified here, replaced the slim silhouettes of earlier times as the ideal of feminine beauty. On this figure the modelling is of high quality, while deftly carved fluid lines define the shape, volume and fall of her robe. Other lines capture the texture of her stiffly lacquered hair, and the delicate weaving of her hemp slippers.

**Court lady.** Tang dynasty (618–906), earthenware with coloured highlights, 39cm high. Courtesy Art Gallery of New South Wales. Gift of Vicki and Lara Liberman in memory of their mother and grandmother Goldie Sternberg, 2006.





## Avalokiteshvara, Sri Lankan, late Anuradhapura period, 800s

Buddhism has inspired the creation of some of the most beautiful and spiritual works of art. Amongst the many inspirational sculptures of Avalokiteshvara, the Lord of Compassion, is this graceful figure whose glowing gold colour is synonymous with the transforming radiance emitted from the body of Buddha when he achieved enlightenment. This figure is of exceptional quality: the supple, youthful body is fluidly modelled — a rhythm of harmonious proportions. The face radiates compassionate wisdom and meditative spirituality. The bodhisattva is both a royal and an ascetic. He is seated calmly in the relaxed posture of 'royal ease', and wears jewels in his belt and hair, yet the skilfully rendered pile of dreadlocks (even down to the odd strands on his shoulder), are the badge of an ascetic who rejects all material wealth

**Avalokiteshvara** Sri Lankan, Late Anuradhapura period, 800s. Gilt bronze, solid cast. 49.6cm. National Museum, Colombo.

## Lovers on a terrace, c.1810

Lovers in dalliance, both divine and human, were a popular subject with painters and patrons at the numerous princely courts of pre-independence India. This much admired painting, a wedding gift from Berthe Ford to her husband John in 1972, and one much requested for inclusion in exhibitions, is a masterpiece of Indian eroticism. Attributed to Chokha, the extraordinary master of intensely sensual love, it exudes the suffused passion, tender restraint and total self-absorption characteristic of his lovers.

The marble terrace setting, the lavish textiles and extravagant jewellery attest the princely life; the hot-coloured cushions, in a circle of disarray, focus attention on the lovers who are oblivious to everyone else. Their abandonment to pleasure is artfully conveyed in the languorous arch of her back as she reaches to pull him closer and his tender absorption with her breasts, fully revealed through her transparent robes.

**Lovers on a terrace**, c.1810. Attributed to Chokha or his circle. Rajasthan, Mewar. opaque watercolour on paper. 22.2 x 16.8cm. Mr and Mrs John Gilmore Ford Collection, promised gift to Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, USA.



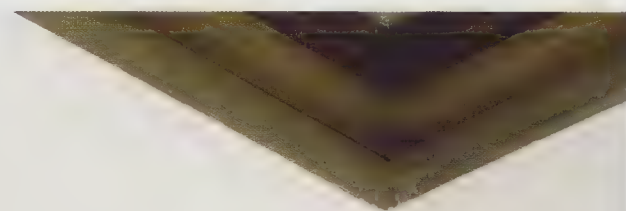




## Varunani, Eastern Ganga, Konarak temple, Orissa, 1200s

This finely carved, dynamic stele once decorated the much admired thirteenth-century Sun Temple at Konarak in the eastern state of Orissa, a designated World Heritage Site. The central figure is Varunani, consort of the major Vedic deity Varuna, seated on her mount (*vahana*), the mythological aquatic *makara*. She is modelled to the Indian ideal of female beauty (large breasts, small waist) and is splendidly decorated with ornate earrings, necklaces, armbands, ankle bracelets and an impressive headdress. These details are crisply and meticulously rendered, as is the back of her throne and its two *makara* head terminals. Varunani expresses the confidence and power one would expect from a goddess who is the personification of *shakti*, the primordial energy of life. The anonymous sculptor has captured her unmitigated authority, assurance and compassion in this absolute masterpiece.

**Varunani** Eastern Ganga, Konarak temple, Orissa, 1200s. black chlorite, 73 x 41 x 23cm, National Museum, New Delhi



## Yoshihiro Suda, *Rose*, 2004

This masterfully carved rose, captured in free fall in its last moments, is a paean to transience and imperfection. The rose is caught at the end of its life: its fully opened petals, one of which has floated free, are realised with meticulous accuracy, even to the insect damage to leaves. Transience is integral to traditional Japanese aesthetics, and so too is *ma*, the 'space that exists between things or events'. *Ma* is the frozen moment found in some kabuki poses or the freeze frame of a contemporary film; here it is the frozen moment when the rose falls to eternal extinction. The artist is the contemporary Tokyo-based artist Yoshihiro Suda, whose other exquisitely rendered delicate sculptures of plants, judiciously placed, energise a space and focus our attention on the most spectacularly ordinary events of nature.

Yoshihiro Suda, **Rose**, 2004, installation: wood painted with mineral pigments, 30 x 30 x 20cm. Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased with funds provided by Geoff and Vicki Ainsworth 2006, © Yoshihiro Suda.





# KUDDITJI KNGWARREYE



Kudditji Kngwarreye, *My Country*, Acrylic on linen 256 x 206cm

## PASTELS: New works, new palette

Showing in our level 3 gallery until August 23

Kudditji, younger brother of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, has established a unique style within the Aboriginal art movement and his paintings are increasingly in demand. The 83-year-old artist's work has already been compared with that of both the French Impressionists and abstract expressionist Mark Rothko, however Kudditji's work continues to evolve. This new collection features colour fields in a largely pastel palette reminiscent of the Fauve movement. Like that of his sister, a renowned colourist, Kudditji's remarkable style continues to demonstrate a fluid versatility with both colour and composition.

This exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to see and acquire the latest works of one of Australia's foremost indigenous artists.

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# An echo of Rothko in Alice Springs

**While an overproduction of Indigenous painting has resulted in much generic work, the best painters are creating works with singular aesthetic qualities. PRUE GIBSON examines the work of one such artist.**

It is human nature to draw associations. We are forever likening one artist's work to another. These compulsive games of association, which many of us suffer, are due to a fundamental Western yearning for classification and order. Finding patterns. If anything, this ritualistic devotion to systems of cataloguing is even more apparent in the art world today than ever before.

In this climate of classification and order, it becomes even more difficult to understand the mystical power of Aboriginal artists such as Kudditji Kngwarreye. He was born in 1928 at Alhalkere, on the edge of Utopia Station, Northern Territory, two hundred and fifty kilometres north-east of Alice Springs. He is the younger brother of Emily Kame Kngwarreye. As a child, he learned the lores and dreamings of the emu. As a middle-aged man, he held the responsibility of an Elder and taught younger boys to hunt emu and to pass on the practical skills and knowledge of the ceremonial sites on Utopia Station.

The lease of Utopia Station was ceded to Aboriginal people in the mid-1970s. There, according to Jennifer Isaacs in her publication *Emily Kngwarreye Paintings*, the Aboriginal locals worked cattle, hunted kangaroo, gathered seeds and grasses, and collected yam seeds, the favourite food of emus. Isaacs asserts that local Utopian women traded necklaces, coolamons (carrying dishes), dancing boards and sticks with travellers along the highway from Alice to Darwin. During this time, Kudditji Kngwarreye mustered cattle and worked in various goldmines in the Northern Territory. Now, due to extreme and ongoing illness, he resides full-time in Alice Springs.

Kudditji Kngwarreye's colour-block paintings inspire further enquiry into the ideology and authorship of Indigenous art. For instance, does first contact with station managers and art centre curators (and later, dealers and collectors) adversely affect contemporary Aboriginal painting? Is it original work or is this very question a pitiful misunderstanding of



the personal and collective philosophies of Indigenous artists?

According to Kate Owen, who has held two large solo exhibitions of Kngwarreye's work, Kudditji first started painting in 1986. He was encouraged to paint traditional dot paintings — outlines which were filled in — and these were dotted Emu Dreaming paintings. However, in the 1990s he started painting in his more abstract style — a version of colour field — which became his signature style. This distinctive mode of painting is constituted by squares, or lozenges, of colour. From a distance these blocks of colour appear to be gradations of saturated light. But on closer viewing, within each block of colour a pandemonium of spontaneous complementary-coloured brushwork has been achieved.

Kngwarreye's absorption with the effects of light, across his country, and his almost scientific approach to the nuances and temporality of colour, has resulted in commentators likening his work to Claude Monet. Equally, the monumental, spiritual and even transcendental experience of his magnificent epochs of colour might suggest associations with Mark Rothko. I found it hard not to think of Philip Guston's 1950s and 1960s abstract paintings, where bold and assured brushstrokes articulate the experience of colour.

So is it really so terrible to draw these associations? Yes, and I am to blame as much as the next person. Despite it being part of human nature, it is lazy and apocryphal thinking because Indigenous art exists in a realm of its own. Kudditji Kngwarreye's paintings are an interpretation of his travels across Utopia; they are



Kudditji Kngwarreye. **My Country**. acrylic on linen. 205 x 280cm



Kudditji Kngwarreye. **My Country**. acrylic on linen. 120 x 240cm.



Kudditji Kngwarreye. **My Country**. acrylic on linen. 92 x 121cm.

Kudditji Kngwarreye. **Emu Dreaming**. acrylic on linen. 123 x 153cm.





Kudditji Kngwarreye, *My Country* acrylic on linen, 180 x 205cm.



Kudditji Kngwarreye, *My Country* acrylic on linen, 117 x 140cm.

his versions of cultural emu creationist stories, some of which are violent or threatening, and they are an invocation of an individual perspective, on behalf of others.

Often described as aerial perspective, because of the way many Aboriginal artists paint the land from what seems to be a hovering position above the ground, the term is not quite appropriate. Firstly, many Indigenous artists would not have travelled by air until late in their careers, if at all. Secondly, Kngwarreye's paintings do not offer the perspective of the land which might be viewed from a plane. In other words, they are without perspective.

Perhaps the best way to describe Kngwarreye's artistic outlook (or compositional view) is to mention methods of narrative writing. It is as though these paintings were made through an omniscient point of view. In literature this means a God-like overall voice, whereby the writer can shift from one character to the next. Few novels are written like this — most are first person or third person, following the point of view of one character alone. Although Kngwarreye's paintings are personal, they are also collective. They document the stories of an entire people. They are closer to narrative than traditional landscape scenes. The fact that Indigenous artists paint the land, and the stories of the land, distracts many viewers into preconceived notions of what a landscape should look like, rather than perceiving a crucial extra element — the absence of unilateral authority.

Within each patch or lozenge of colour, painted on a black background, is a rich assortment of colour gradations. Songs, hunts, stories, travels and the food and water of the Anmatyerre country are all intended, by the artist, to infuse the paintings. The histories of the Sandover and Bunday Rivers which cross Utopia Station also secretly inform these paintings. Although he now lives in Alice Springs, Kudditji still continues to paint the ancestor stories.

Kngwarreye's sister Emily Kame Kngwarreye has received fervent attention since the late 1980s, with monographs published and much curatorial research completed on her life and work. Chandler Coventry, Gabrielle Pizzi, Christopher Hodges, Ace Bourke and many other art-world figures discovered the paintings of Emily soon after 1989, when she first began painting colourful abstract paintings on canvas.

She is one of many desert artists to contradict previous notions of what contemporary Indigenous painting means, and its intent. Her work also draws attention to why contemporary Aboriginal paintings attract such strong associations with western abstract painting, despite little contact between the two. Kudditji Kngwarreye's work throws up similar points of influence and authorship to consider. He has not, as yet, received such close attention ... but, no doubt, he soon will.



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## Gallery 9 — a serene showcase for serious artists

**PRUE GIBSON**  
finds much to  
admire in a gallery  
whose perfectly  
proportioned  
rooms provide a  
haven for the quiet  
contemplation  
of the works of  
some notable  
practitioners.

Many commercial galleries are led by prominent, and occasionally notorious, figureheads who create a specific art aesthetic for their gallery. Sometimes the gallery influence over the type of work shown is intentional — after all, a signature 'look' can establish a higher profile and reputation. In other circumstances, the influence is not intentional but emerges, nevertheless, because of the gallery director's personal taste. Either way, the danger of influence is that artists' work can, in worst circumstances, become prescriptive.

However, as soon as you enter Darlinghurst's Gallery 9, there is an atmosphere of the artist-run space. Allan Cooley, brother of artist Peter Cooley, long dreamed of establishing a gallery which redressed the problem, in the early 2000s, of art becoming expensive and structured. "Younger artists were not having the opportunities or no opportunities beyond an artist-run space," suggested Cooley. "Gallery 9 encourages ground up curating. If work has an edge and is contemporary, we consider it."

Some of the Gallery 9 artists respond to environmental, intellectual and social issues. For instance, artist Jade Pegler channels the order and hierarchy of the unnatural

world. Her sculptures and videos refer to systemic chains-of-command as much as futuristic worlds of alien specimens. As Pegler's paper and string beasts meander across the whitewashed floors and up the walls of the gallery, they function as a cautionary tale for the future of mankind. With their bobbin bulbs and paperback extremities, the sculptures also remind us of ancient places and monolithic times. Pegler's bobbins have diagonal flanges and are suggestive of loudspeakers or prehistoric ears. In other words, they call forth the past and the future, listening in silence. Spindles or gumnuts, flora or fauna, the viewer is not convinced they know what they see, even though it's all surprisingly familiar.

Pegler arranges her "strange antiquated specimens and alien things not yet in existence" around the gallery where they quiver and bend. She also miniaturised creatures into a small 'mise en scène' for a short video called *Horrologue*. In the video, scraps of history, science and fiction (she recycles found books) are mulched into mysterious forms which wriggle and hide, emerge and transform. An interest in morphology, evolution and cladistics (hierarchical classification) reminds us of the oddities and surprises to be found in both the natural and

Top: Jade Pegler, *Horrologue*, 2008-2009  
unique DVD, 2.06 minutes





Rebecca Pearson, **Wandering Worlds**, 2009, mixed media, 32cm diameter

cyber worlds and the bizarre fallout of technology.

It is not mandatory to read an artist's résumé, but in the case of fellow Gallery 9 artist Rebecca Pearson, her background in stage design at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) is germane to her snow domes, candle-holder museum curiosities and layered Alpine lands. Pearson is a collector of nostalgia — other people's stories and memories of a collective humanity. She rummages through op shops, gathering discarded belongings, especially old souvenirs and travel books. Pearson creates worlds, in layered collages and wall-hung snow domes, which feature snow-capped mountains. This is not a coincidence but a mobilisation of sentimentality. Chocolate box scenes of wintry landscapes, postcards from utopian northern European lands: these scenes are unusual for most Australian dwellers and therefore curious. Pearson taps into this human longing for places we have never seen, except in movies and other people's photograph albums.

The idea of the souvenir is central to Pearson's work. Memory, inspired by an object, conjures nostalgic worlds which are as fictional as they are real. Memory functions in a weblike way: our memories are changed by history and reinterpretation. Souvenirs are reminders of an original experience which has become changed by time. But Pearson also transforms her Alpine scenes by incorporating a palm tree, for instance, in an otherwise icy scene. This is a link with issues of global warming, literally 'the disruption to the planet'.

Where these two artists are dealing with recyclable materials and responding to evolutionary and environmental changes, Melbourne-based John Aslinidis's works are a testament to years of abstraction. With a personal interest in philosophy and how random events affect the global economy, Aslinidis approaches his paintings with a mixture of preconception and improvisation. His paintings are mesmerising optical illusions. Although he starts in one corner of a painting and works out in all directions from there, which seems random if not haphazard, there is order in his method. After all, any improvisation — in music, art, literature or dance — is more skilful and effective after many years of practice.

His work differs from traditional Optical art because of its emotive qualities and the random and intuitive application of paint. Aslinidis's abstract optical works comprise radiating patterns of concentric circles and crosses. He says: "Through circular motifs I am able to create a sense of complexity and fragmentation ... a zone between vision and sound. The cross-forms are an intersection ... part of creating an optimistic vision."



Brett East, **A Distinct Lack of Relevant Contemporary Signifiers**, 2009, oil on linen, 51 x 61cm

Musical structures, rhythms resonating and pulsing, melodies played pianissimo or forte — these are the emotive effects of Aslinidis's configurations. He says: "Music is a subconscious influence. I am inspired by sound and more particularly electronic music, certain beats, sounds and counterpoint rhythms."

Aslinidis's radiating patterns are as fastidious and complex as Brett East's refined exactitudes of paint. East's works are paintings of paint. Paint tubes, to be precise. His previous show with Gallery 9 involved photographs and paintings of slightly sinister beakers, pill bottles and tubes. Arranged in a tableau style, they charted, according to Allan Cooley, the transference away from formal religion to the use of drugs, in order to find balance in our emotional lives.

His second show with Gallery 9, however, marked a move to the noxious but sensual qualities of paint. This is not paint mixed on a palette but premixed, oozed straight from the tube. With titles like *Friends tell me you're irrelevant but I can't stop loving you*, East is making a comment on the modernist rejection of painterly art, whereby the finished pure abstract surface is all that matters, and passion for brushstrokes should be spurned.

Although the content, variety of media and preoccupations of these four artists are diverse, they are speculative in nature. By this, I mean that the work of all four artists is an anticipation of the future and, as such, has the potential for even greater returns — both philosophically and financially.



John Aslinidis, **Sonic-Network no. 3**, 2007, oil and acrylic on canvas, 244 x 305cm



# Conservation of Australian Aboriginal bark paintings



**BEATA TWOREK-  
MATUSZKIEWICZ**  
discusses the  
delicate business of  
restoring and caring  
for bark paintings  
and the best  
conditions in which  
to display them.

Above: Flaking paint on bark surface.

Conservation of Australian Aboriginal bark paintings is a relatively new field in conservation theory and practice. It requires great understanding of their material characteristics and cultural significance, which is so different to paintings of the European tradition. The concept of material permanence was, until the mid-twentieth-century, not a part of Aboriginal experience. The prevailing environmental conditions and the inherent properties of the materials used for bark paintings made them transient objects in their original environment and cultural context. It is only from the latter part of the twentieth-century that Aboriginal art made for the public domain has entered the art market and thus the concept of permanence and longevity has become an important issue for the Indigenous artists.

Preservation of bark paintings requires utmost respect for Aboriginal cultural traditions and a thorough understanding of their material structure and composition. Bark paintings are made of naturally occurring materials: eucalyptus bark, mineral pigments, charcoal, and plant- or animal-derived binders, which hold pigment particles together. Since the 1970s, artists have substituted natural binders for the readily available commercial wood adhesives, mostly based on polyvinyl acetate (PVA) emulsions.

Most conservation problems related to bark paintings come as a result of the inherent properties of the materials and techniques of their manufacture. Bark, once removed from the living tree, undergoes a series of physical and chemical changes. Warping and buckling are the visible effects of the loss of moisture and a natural tendency of bark to revert back to its original, cylindrical shape. Attempts to prevent these natural movements — such as forced flattening of a distorted bark — may lead to cracking and splitting. Cracking can also occur as the result of rapid drying of the bark. There is little that can be done to rectify these problems once they occur. Preventive steps can be taken which involve maintaining stable environmental conditions during storage and display, and proper support, thus minimising the risk of further damage.

Insect attack and mould growth are often the cause of deterioration. Borers cause physical weakening or even destruction of the painting's support. If insect activity is detected, it is advisable to contact a conservation laboratory at the local museum or gallery for further advice as soon as possible. Mould growth may contribute to degradation of the paint by attacking the binding medium as well as causing severe discolouration of the painted surface and disfiguration of the image. Although success of any treatment depends on the unique characteristics of each painting and the extent of the damage, it is fair to say that the removal of mould stains is extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is, therefore, essential to prevent and arrest mould growth with assistance from an experienced conservator as soon as possible to have it removed from the surface in an appropriate manner. Mould growth can be controlled to a great extent by keeping the relative humidity at levels unsuitable for its growth (below 65% RH).

Routine inspections of newly acquired objects for any signs of insect or mould activity can prevent serious damage from occurring. It is not recommended to spray any of the commercially available insecticides or fungicides on the painting, as they may cause staining while not killing any insects or fungus.

All conservation treatments are constrained by the professional ethic of minimising intervention. The main aim of any treatment is to stabilise the present condition



of the painting without any purely cosmetic treatment — such as in-painting paint losses. All conservation materials are carefully chosen for their proven long-term stability, which ensures that they will not alter the appearance of the painting well into the future.

Many bark paintings — both old and new — suffer from flaking paint. There are many factors which influence the long-term stability of the paint layer. These include properties of the pigments used, the artist's technique of paint preparation and the environmental conditions the painting was subjected to during its life. The types of pigments used are generally very stable with little chance of the colour fading. However, binders may undergo processes of chemical and physical breakdown. This may lead to flaking or powdering of the paint and the resulting permanent losses.

The treatment for stabilising the paint involves choosing an appropriate agent, which is carefully introduced under each flake to adhere the lifting paint in position. This very time-consuming treatment is only carried out locally. There is no effective and ethically acceptable preventive treatment which can be applied to a paint layer to prevent possible damage in the future.

Commercially available fixatives should never be sprayed on bark paintings. Such treatments are ineffective, as there is insufficient penetration of the fixative through the paint layer. Such 'varnishes' are usually deposited on the surface causing shininess, collecting dust and undergoing deterioration themselves, causing yellowing or lifting of the surface. Once applied to the paint, these 'coatings' cannot be removed and therefore significantly contribute to the long-term deterioration of the painting.

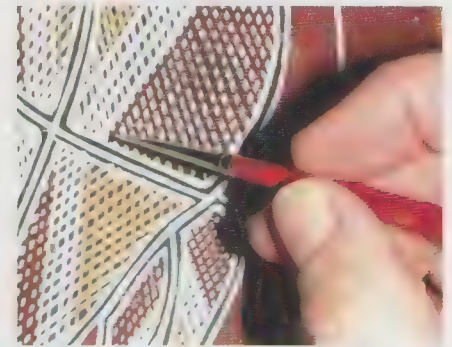
Damage to bark paintings is often the result of inappropriate storage and display methods or poor handling resulting in holes, punctures, indentations or cracks. The fragile paint layers are easily damaged by abrasion, scratching or the accumulation of dust. Such damage cannot be repaired but can be easily prevented by following simple preventive measures.

It is recommended to store bark paintings in a horizontal position, which reduces the danger of damage to fragile paint layers and minimises the risk of cracking of the bark. They should be stored in a dust-free environment — easily achieved by storing bark paintings flat in covered boxes. Display methods of bark paintings prove to be hard to solve as the objects themselves do not naturally possess any potential for display mechanisms. One simple, unobtrusive type of display system involves presentation of paintings in the way they were created — unframed, without any visual boundaries. They are simply rested on L-shaped metal brackets, or shelves, and secured to the wall by a barely noticeable clip at the top.



Beata Tworek-Matuszkiewicz at work

Consolidation of flaking paint.



Effect of shiny varnish

Paintings in private collections may need an increased level of protection from dust or mechanical damage. A display system ensuring greater protection of the work can be achieved using a perspex box/frame system in which the painting can be safely exhibited. It is important to ensure that paintings are not hung on exterior walls, which are exposed to the extremes of temperature or condensation, causing warping, splitting and paint flaking. For similar reasons, sunny spots and places in close proximity to heating/cooling vents should be avoided. Places close to sources of high humidity such as kitchens, laundries or bathrooms are not recommended for displaying or storing bark paintings. The best locations for displaying bark paintings include interior wall spaces which are not in direct sunlight.

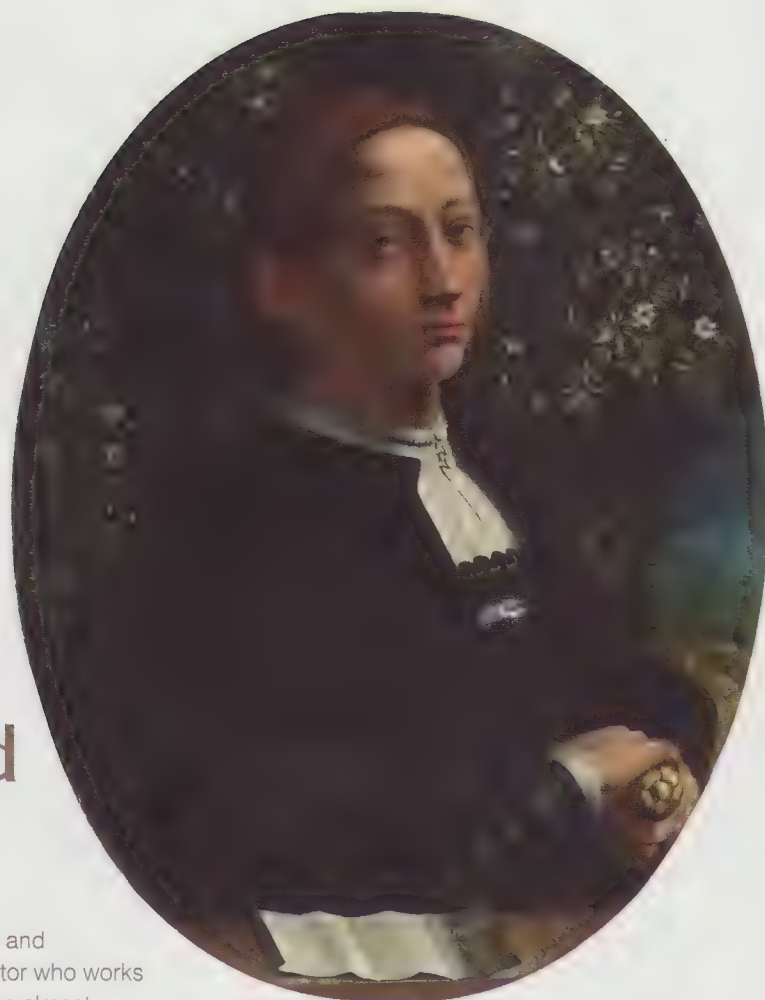
Conservators play a significant role in enriching public understanding of the unique beauty of bark paintings by contributing to the study of materials, techniques and art practices. Through their careful, informed approach to conservation treatments and thorough understanding of preventive conservation needs, conservators ensure paintings on bark can be appreciated by many future generations.



Materials used for bark painting.



# The remarkable discovery of a woman known to history but rarely depicted



**CARL VILLIS, the conservator of paintings pre-1800 at the National Gallery of Victoria, discusses how modern technologies assist in unravelling the mysteries of a painting.**

**A**rt museums are places of study and reflection; and for any conservator who works in one, the collection presents an almost infinite number of potential research projects. Each picture contains its unique and remarkable set of stories, both visible and hidden: what it is telling us as a work of art, why it was made, when it was made, how it was made and so on.

Our understanding of paintings is inevitably enriched by an awareness of the cultural and historical context surrounding them, so increasingly, gallery visitors and scholars are demanding to know more about each individual work. Recently, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the National Gallery in London and the Philadelphia Museum of Art have all published exhaustive catalogues of their permanent collections, bearing out this new trend in scholarship.

Art historians are usually engaged in researching the history of an artwork from archival sources and then interpreting the historical information together with the visual information contained within the image. But this process does not always give us the full story; this is particularly the case with paintings so old that their provenance and history are unknown. Consequently, conservators are often called on to look for additional information relating to materials and techniques which might fill gaps in our knowledge, and these pieces of information can sometimes be critical towards shaping our fundamental understanding and appreciation of the artwork.

In modern conservation practice, technical examination goes hand in hand with the traditional processes of restoration. Indeed, no major conservation treatment can go forward without a prior technical examination process, which can involve any number of analytical techniques ranging from x-radiography, infrared reflectography, to pigment analysis and microscopy, to name just the most essential. The amount of time devoted to technical examination will

usually depend on how many unanswered questions persist throughout the process.

In the past decade, a number of paintings at the National Gallery of Victoria have benefited from modern technical investigation. Recently, the gallery announced that one of its Renaissance paintings, formerly known as *Portrait of a Youth* by an unknown Northern Italian painter, has now been reattributed as a portrait of Lucrezia Borgia by the sixteenth-century Ferrarese master Dosso Dossi. This painting has mystified art historians for decades, if not centuries, fuelled by the perception that the work had been substantially modified by restorers over the intervening centuries and no longer resembled the work as it originally appeared. In particular, it was believed that the portrait was once rectangular in shape and had been cropped into its



CSIRO materials scientist Deborah Lau examines the portrait by Dosso Dossi using a portable X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy unit to determine the composition of the artist's pigments

Top: Dosso Dossi, *Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara*, 1518, oil on wood panel, 74.5 x 57.2cm. National Gallery of Victoria



oval format in a later century. It was said that oval paintings did not exist in the early part of the sixteenth century. The first of these assumptions was proven wrong during the examination process, which revealed that the painting had always been oval in shape.

Subsequent research found that the only place where oval paintings were commonly made during this period was in the cultivated ducal court of Renaissance Ferrara, specifically in the work of Duke Alfonso d'Este's court painter Dosso Dossi. This discovery was the first piece of evidence to point to a specific painter, yet it was another, far more specific discovery which provided conclusive evidence suggesting this particular artist. Dosso Dossi, who was known for the idiosyncratic imagery of his paintings, was equally unconventional in his approach with painting materials and techniques.

He is recognised as an artist with a highly specific technical profile and has been much studied in recent decades. One feature was noted by conservation scientists in the 1990s: he was one of the first northern Italian painters to use a dark brown priming layer over the traditional white gesso preparation which sits underneath the paint layers. Even more specific to his technique was the discovery that Dosso was known to have occasionally added brown clay — not a material traditionally used by painters — to this dark layer. Microscopic samples of the paint layers were taken from the NGV portrait and were analysed with the help of a CSIRO materials chemist. Not only was the dark brown priming layer found, but scientific analysis of this layer revealed the presence of clay, providing highly specific evidence applicable only to this artist. These important discoveries were some of the first steps in the wider process of reassessing the portrait from an iconographic and stylistic perspective, eventually leading to the conclusion that the portrait's subject must be female rather than male, and whose name was Lucrezia. The information drawn from the whole research project was so compelling that by the end only one candidate presented itself: Lucrezia Borgia, who was at this time the Duchess of Ferrara.

Modern technical examination is also extremely useful for the restoration of paintings. Another important Renaissance painting in the NGV collection is by the great Venetian master Titian: a portrait of a bearded monk. This painting was cleaned in 2005 with the removal of an old darkened varnish. Although the figure of the monk was relatively well preserved for a painting of this age, one part of it was thought to be irretrievably lost long ago in the past. The book held by the friar was so badly ravaged from previous cleaning attempts that it more resembled a blank board than a book.

Leather-bound books of this period were often richly decorated or embossed, and it was clear that this book also once contained some elaborate



Titian, *A monk with a book*, c.1550, (after conservation treatment), oil on canvas, 84.5 x 74.5cm. National Gallery of Victoria.

patterning. Faced with one element of the picture so badly worn, the conservator must decide whether to leave it as a lost feature or, as usually occurs, to re-create it in some way so that the painting retains an acceptable degree of overall visual coherence. These sorts of problems are usually solved by looking at similar examples and borrowing motifs from works by the same artist. In this case, however, a high-magnification stereo-microscope examination revealed nearly invisible traces of original paint, which provided enough evidence to replicate Titian's exact pattern for the book. This way viewers are now able to see — for the first time in over a century — the book as it was originally intended.

Many standard examination techniques have been with us for a long time; indeed, paintings were first X-rayed over a hundred years ago. However, we are only now entering a time in which technical findings are becoming properly integrated with mainstream historical and stylistic analysis, and it is certain that continuing advances in the use of technology will provide even further enlightenment and surprises for the next generation of viewers and art scholars.

AR



Above: Detail of Titian's *A monk with a book* (before conservation treatment)

Below: Detail after conservation treatment





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Mikel Wintermantel SUMMER THUNDERHEAD, Atelier Interactive Professional Artists' Acrylics on canvas, 2008. Artwork courtesy of [www.mikelwintermantel.com](http://www.mikelwintermantel.com)

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# Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri

## Form follows feeling

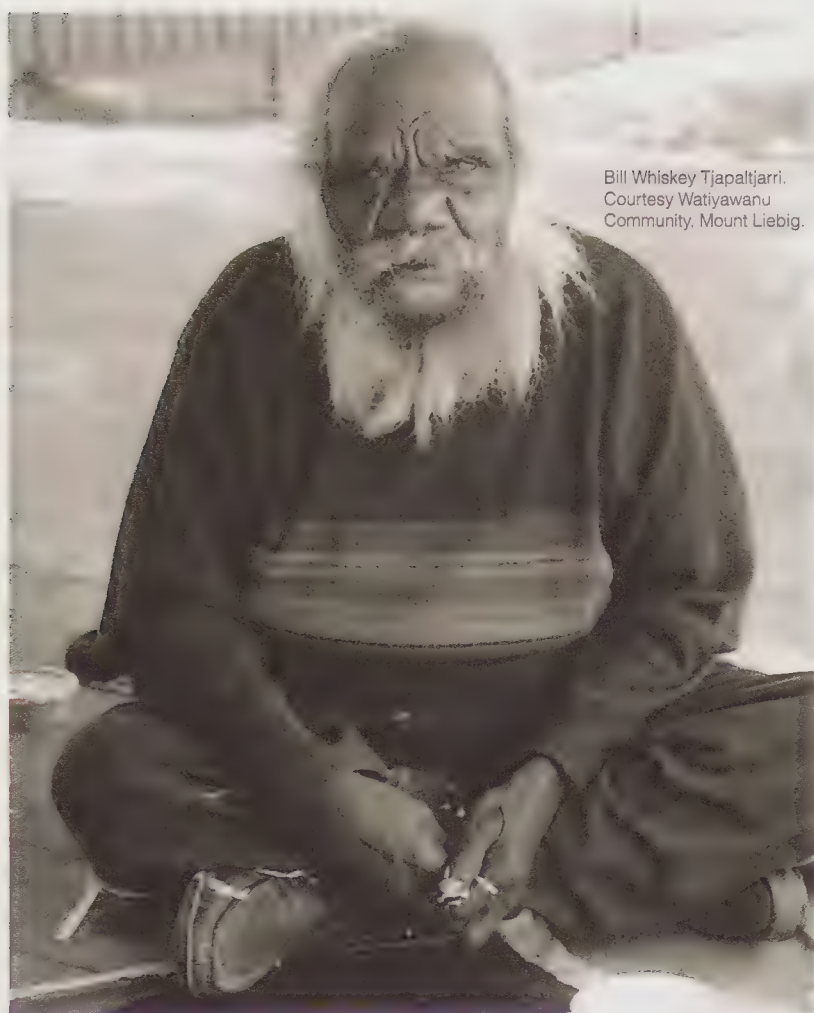
**JOSEPH BRENNAN** looks at the extraordinary life and the memorable paintings of Bill Whiskey (whiskery) Tjapaltjarri.

When Bill Whiskey (Mininderi in Pitjantjatjara) passed away in August of last year, he was one of Australia's most collectable artists. Having only taken up painting three years prior, the legacy left in the wake of his passing reveals a most exceptional talent. In the words of Susan McCulloch, "he is simply a knockout painter".

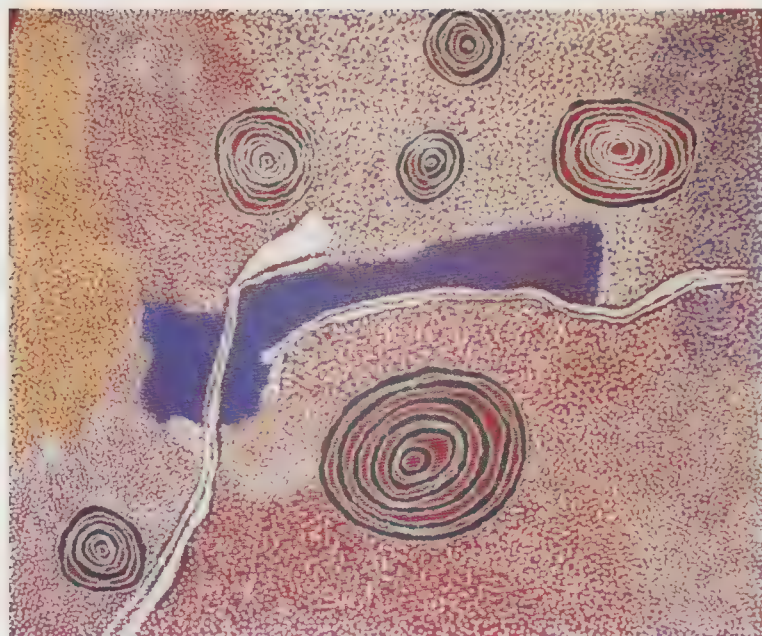
Whiskey was born during the 1920s to a life of hunting and gathering in a place he called "white cocky country", a few kilometres south of the Pirulpakalarintja outstation at Pirupa Akla. Travelling as a small child to Uluru to learn the places where food and water could be sourced, it was here that Whiskey first encountered white man, before a conflict led him and his family back to their traditional tribal lands. The years that followed were spent moving from dependable waterhole to dependable waterhole, until the death of his father

led him on foot to the Lutheran Mission community of Haasts Bluff. It was here that Whiskey was given his first set of clothes and met his wife Colleen Nampitjinpa, a Luritja woman from Tjukula in Western Australia. Together they had five children, three sons (Herman, Paul and Shawn) and two daughters (Kathleen and Louise). Both Whiskey and his wife were referred to as 'Ngangkari', or traditional healers.

After spending decades at Haasts Bluff, Whiskey and his family moved to an outstation at Amunturrngu (Mt Liebig), around 80 km west of Papunya, where they would remain for the rest of his life. It was because of his beard that he became known as 'Bill Whiskery', later abbreviated to 'Whiskey'. He would describe himself, "I'm Mininderi Tjapaltjarri, the painter Bill Whiskey." Although for many years Whiskey would paint elaborate dot designs on nulla-nullas and spears, it



Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri.  
Courtesy Watiyawanu  
Community, Mount Liebig.



Left: Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri, *Rockholes and Country around the Olgas* 2007, acrylic on linen, 180 x 151cm. Courtesy Japingka Gallery, Fremantle.  
Above: Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri, *Rockholes near the Olgas*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 270 x 180cm. Courtesy Japingka Gallery, Fremantle.



was years later that he painted with acrylics on canvas, his wandering youth coming back through stories of the rockholes near Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) near his homeland and the tracks around them, so that "the next time we come back we know which way to go".

Whiskey's passion for art grew out of the Western Desert art movement, which kicked off in the 1970s with the formation of the Papunya Tula Artists in the nearby Papunya. Encouraging Aboriginal elders to paint representations of their Tjukurrpa, or mythical stories connected with the Dreaming, initial criticism of the movement — revealing secret ceremonial meanings through the painting of ancient symbols — is believed to have led to the adoption of 'dotting techniques' by Aboriginal artists as a way of concealing direct reference to secret designs, much like abstract styles in Anglo-American art.

Although Whiskey wouldn't request a canvas for himself until December 2005, once he had, it didn't take long for his art to be noticed. By the end of 2006, he was a finalist in the 23rd National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards, was represented in the Kerry Stokes Collection, had exhibited internationally at Knud Grothe Gallery in Copenhagen and had held his first solo exhibition at Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne.

Honey Ant Gallery, based in Sydney and Noosa, was one of the galleries to represent Whiskey. Lisa McLaren from the Sydney gallery recalled a time when her parents, Rae and Warren Walker from Noosa, visited Whiskey on a hot day in March 2007, where they watched him work from the shade of a small mulga tree. "From what we learnt of him during his painting career," she said, "we came to know him as an extremely passionate artist."

The Australian National University's Director of the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Howard Morphy, attributes the Art Gallery of New South Wales's then Deputy Director Tony Tuckson as being the first to bring Aboriginal art into an Australian fine art gallery with his 1959 acquisition of major work from Tiwi and Yolngu artists. In what Morphy describes as the "shattering of an anthropological paradigm", the acquisition became the earliest public collection of Aboriginal art to be acquired for aesthetic rather than ethnographic reasons.

Tuckson saw universality in art objects, believing there to be an underlying, unifying quality in art that resided in its visual sense of balance and proportion, a quality that made its appreciation possible without any knowledge of its meaning or original purpose. In a similar vein, McCulloch believed Whiskey's art to have 'a consistency of quality — impressive for [its] balance of colour, design, fluidity and formalism'. McLaren, describing Whiskey's "love of the colour cadmium orange", sees the work as valuable, based purely on its aesthetic appeal. These views echo Tuckson's logic that, in essence, art appreciators could make aesthetic judgements concerning works they knew little about.



Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri. *Rockholes near the Olgas* 2008, acrylic on linen, 151 x 151cm. Courtesy Japingka Gallery, Fremantle



Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri. *Rockholes and Country near the Olgas*, 2006, acrylic on linen, 150 x 150cm. Courtesy Japingka Gallery, Fremantle





Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri. *Rockholes near the Olgas*. 2008, acrylic on linen, 240 x 183cm. Courtesy Japingka Gallery Fremantle.



Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri. *Rockholes near the Olgas*. 2008, acrylic on linen, 180 x 153cm. Courtesy Japingka Gallery, Fremantle.

But what makes Whiskey's art memorable is that it's not only aesthetically, but also culturally, significant.

Anthropologist Ronald Berndt argues against an 'aesthetics only' approach to Aboriginal art, believing that, by divorcing art from context, viewers come to evaluate work using their own idiom. Much like Belk and Groves's ethnographic study — which revealed passing on of Dreaming stories as the number one motivator for Aboriginal artists — ANU School of Art Deputy Director Nigel Lendon argues that knowledge of the social and cultural background of Aboriginal art enhances viewer appreciation.

For Whiskey, that background is overwhelmingly the Dreaming story Cockatoo Dreaming, which tells the story of three birds: a white cockatoo in search of food, a greedy black crow — whose attempt to steal the food leaves great holes in the landscape — and an eagle that seduces the crow to help the cockatoo. *Cockatoo Dreaming* tells the story of the rockholes near the Olgas, a Dreaming site of great importance to Whiskey who, according to McLaren, was so passionate about telling his story he was often taking "small pieces of linen back to his house and painting at night".

Luke Taylor, an anthropologist specialising in the art of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, believes in a "crystallisation of art and ethnography", seeing art's aesthetic forms as connected to its social context. As ANU Professor Sasha Grishin attests, "Whiskey's paintings operate on a number of levels of meaning", his art couples the aesthetic with the cultural — and his legacy is beautiful work steeped in personal history.





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Johannes Parnoke, surface (fore), Sophie Hoppe, spheres (back), Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe 2009. Photo Peter Phoenix

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**HORACE WIKMUNE Warram (Dugong)**, 2008. Ochres with acrylic binder on milkwood, 44 cm x 107 cm x 23 cm.  
Collection: The University of Queensland. Courtesy Wik and Kugu Art Centre in Aurukun, North Queensland and the artist.

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John Hutchinson, *Line in the Sand*, 2009, timber, steel, 400 x 300 x 40cm.

# An exhibition with a vast following

**KEN SCARLETT** travelled to Cottesloe to see how a west coast version of *Sculpture by the Sea* would fare. He reports on its success.

## *Sculpture by the Sea*

Cottesloe, Western Australia  
5–24 March 2009

**S**culpture by the Sea began in 1997 at Sydney's Bondi Beach as a one-day wonder, with sixty-four works on the beach and along the spectacular cliff-side walk. In subsequent annual exhibitions over the last twelve years, a remarkable 1186 sculptures have been displayed.

The initiator and director of this highly successful art event, David Handley, commented recently, "*Sculpture by the Sea* is the joy of my life and the albatross around my neck." He now has a staff of twelve full-time and four part-time to assist in the complex tasks of seeking sponsorship, selecting, siting and selling sculpture.

The cliff-side walk from Bondi to Tamarama has proved an ideal location, attracting an estimated 500,000 visitors in 2008. Since its inception, exhibitions have also been held in other spectacular venues close to Australian capital cities. Cottesloe, a suburb of Perth, has now held five large-scale presentations of *Sculpture by the Sea*.

The setting here is dramatic — seemingly on the very edge of Australia. The sea stretches endlessly to a distant horizon as though, on a clear day, one might almost catch a glimpse of Africa. Yet despite this vast space, the sculptures fared remarkably well, for they had been both carefully selected and sensitively sited. Large-scale works such as Gary Deirmendjian's huge containers looked as though they had been swept off a ship and dumped on the sand, while a subtle, small-scale work like Peter Tilley's *Dreaming and Surviving* was nestled amongst a bank of trees.

The wide-open spaces of sand, which could have appeared empty, were thickly populated with people, contributing an interesting sense of scale. Families with picnic baskets of food sheltered from the sun in the shade of steel sculptures, and kids shouted with delight when they discovered Gordon Mitchell's gigantic wrist-watch partly buried in the sand. Philip Spelman's *Parabola* in brilliant red sang a joyous song to the sea and sky with its verticals supporting a row of cloud-like shapes which cast irregular shadows on a structure remarkably like a picnic table — utterly appropriate, as wherever one looked there were family groups, young lovers, sunbaking teenagers and kids licking ice-creams.

Amongst the cleverly selected and located works were the humorously large *Lifesavers* — brightly coloured versions of the popular sweet, cast in resin and fibreglass by Denise Pepper and Brooke Zeligman — located in the area patrolled by real lifesavers. And John Hutchinson's *Line in the Sand*, drawn by a bright red and black 2B pencil, may have been pencil thin but it was four metres high (the artist wondered if spectators would decide to cross over the line).

Other works, while not necessarily relying on subject matter or association for effect, were





Denise Pepper, Brooke Zeligman, *Lifesavers*, 2009, resin coated  
\*preglass, installation 1.25 x 5 x 4m



Philip Spelman, *Parabola*, 2008, painted  
fabricated steel, 250 x 350 x 165cm

Campbell Robertson-Swann, *Intro lbo*  
2009, steel. Photo Leeanne Wright

nevertheless impressive simply because they were extraordinarily successful pieces of sculpture. Fletcher Benton, an American artist with a big reputation (and a price tag of \$330,000 to match) had an audacious assemblage of quite disparate forms, appropriately entitled *Blocks on blocks: one on two, ball and ring*.

All this sun and sand was a far cry from the accustomed gallery scene. There was also an indoor exhibition space in the Cottesloe Surf Life Saving Club where a further eighty or so works were displayed. While bearing some resemblance to a gallery with its innumerable white painted plinths, instead of the expected neutral white walls there were enticing views out to sea. Exhibiting so many disparate works in close proximity presents both the curator and the spectator with a sense of visual complexity, something that can only be overcome by

concentrating on each work individually.

With this approach in mind, it was possible to realise the potential of particular works, even small objects such as Orest Keywan's *Dark Forest Dream*, which was both a tough little sculpture in welded steel and a quite literal depiction of a burnt forest tree. Michael Le Grand's work attracted attention — an extremely confident linear structure in steel, painted a bright pink-purple, as immaculate as the duco on a brand new car. The superbly crafted, pure white marble forms of the visiting Japanese artist Keizo Ushio regrettably lost some of their subtlety at certain times of the day due to the brilliant sunlight streaming in the wide







Mark Grey-Smith, *Within*, 2009, oxidised steel. Photo Leeanne Wright



Gordon Mitchell, *Crab in the Works*, 2009, aluminium, mild steel, 120 x 500 x 100cm.

glass windows, while Greg Johns' two *Mandalas* consistently read very well as strong silhouettes.

This exhibition of smaller, domestic-scale works provided an important contrast with the often extremely large works on the beachfront and was an encouragement for people to purchase them for their suburban homes. Even in these difficult financial times, 30% of the outdoor works were sold and a considerable number of the smaller sculptures were also acquired. Amongst the larger works sold was Greg Johns' dramatic, 4 metre high *Floating Figure* in Corten steel, bought by BHP Billiton and generously donated to the town of Newman in the Pilbara. It is encouraging to note that the City of Perth Art Foundation and the City of Melville also made significant purchases.

Sculptors have supported *Sculpture by the Sea* over many years, partly because the exhibitions



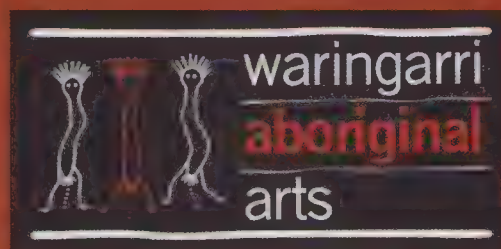
David Carstairs, *Where's the Picnic?*, 2009, aluminium. Photo Leeanne Wright

have given them a chance to display their work to a new audience, to people who possibly don't frequent the commercial galleries. And remarkably, sales have been very good — *Sculpture by the Sea* in 2008, in Sydney, sold works to the value of over a million dollars. The commission earned by this not-for-profit organisation being the difference between it staying afloat or sinking. Artists have also greatly appreciated the financial support given to them — each sculptor whose work is accepted for display in Sydney receives \$2000 as a contribution towards the costs of construction and transport. *Sculpture by the Sea* has undoubtedly become an Australian institution; it will reappear in Sydney at the end of October 2009, in Cottesloe in March 2010 — and in June this year at Aarhus in Denmark. Invited by The Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Denmark after they had seen the Bondi exhibition a few years ago, their patronage will give the exhibition undoubted publicity. Of the sixty artists exhibiting, half will be from Australia — the majority from NSW — but with a good spread amongst other states.

**AR**

*The author was a guest of Sculpture by the Sea and Eventscorp WA.*





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Crowds at the opening night of the 2008 NATSIAA

## Art fever in Darwin

**JOKO GORDON** discusses how the annual Telstra award, whose epicentre is always Darwin, galvanises Indigenous art communities around Australia and beyond.

**26th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award (NATSIAA)**

Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory

Darwin

14 August–31 October 2009

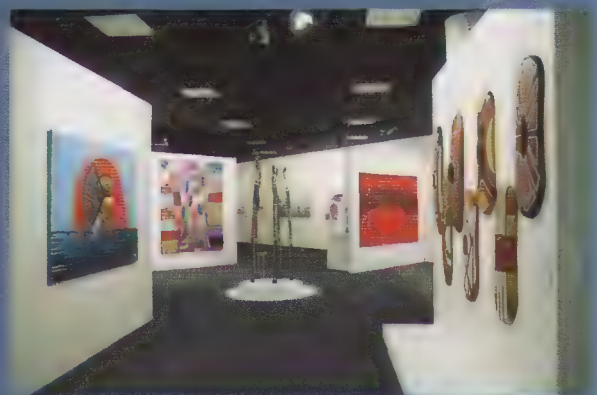
As the bushfires creep and redden the earth of the Northern Territory, it is a true sign that the dry season has hit Darwin. With this comes a potent mix of anxiety, expectation and joy amongst the Indigenous arts community and its followers. The annual main event being the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Islanders Arts Awards, which has been held at the Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory (MAGNT) since 1984. Those in the art industry call it simply 'The Telstra'.

From throughout the country, artists, art lovers and art critics of all calibre catch the red eye flight specials to converge on the dusty roads and highways to attend the opening event and presentation of the awards, which have been sponsored by Telstra since 1992. The who's who of the Australian art world rub shoulders for a few days with the Top End locals for one reason alone: the art. Some have been described as vultures, some as connoisseurs.

The awards make Darwin the hub of the Indigenous art world for a few days in August. Many satellite exhibitions in commercial galleries and rented spaces combine with the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, where arts centres showcase their creations, celebrate in tandem with the awards the diversity and wealth of Australian Indigenous art. The success of these shows depends on the awards, which remain the main event. The awards are like an aging lover: cherished, treasured, loved, frustrating, infuriating and boring at times, but always loyal and constant. In showcasing the myriad styles and

expressions of visual Indigenous art, the awards cater for all; from the deservedly established artists such as Makinti Napanangka, John Mawurndjul, Dennis Nonna, Yvonne Koolmatne, Judy Watson, Pantjiti Mary McLean and Queenie McKenzie to artists who potentially embody the next chapter of the art movements. And when it comes to the audiences, it is just as palpably diverse, from Territorians, artists, sponsors and bureaucrats to commercial gallery owners, backpackers and 'Mr and Mrs Smith'. All are genuinely welcome on the lawns of the MAGNT, the premier cultural institution of the Northern Territory.

It needs to be acknowledged that the NATSIAA provides a genuine opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, politicians and constituents to truly communicate freely with each other. It is a unique



A section of the works exhibited in the 2008 NATSIAA



Makinti Napanangka **Untitled** synthetic polymer paint on linen, 2008, 122 x 137cm. Winner of the 2008 NATSIAA. Image courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

time when many artists and controversial art workers from across Australia get to catch up and exchange and compare thoughts — not to mention critique each other. All this has been achieved and maintained by the artists and the hard-working committed staff of MAGNT. The works, as the insiders call them, not only reflect the traditions and histories of Indigenous Australia but the unique creative process that is universal.

Unfortunately, this seems to have been overlooked and disregarded in the written domain in recent years. Too often, the artists and communities have been forgotten in the equation. At a time when the core values of the awards, as I understood, were purely to celebrate and applaud excellence and engagement, one must be alarmed by the sterilised context in which many of the works are exhibited in the gallery. The artists and the works clearly deserve more. As the works are becoming more complex and diverse, they require adequate space which, with some imagination, and no doubt more funding, could be accommodated within the exceptional MAGNT grounds. This would provide a showcase for everybody to truly engage with the works which we are all there for. The strength of successive exhibitions is that all media are represented, including bark painting, multimedia, canvas, fibre sculptures and other three-dimensional works. Its weakness is the amalgamation of so many eclectic art pieces: this has to be any curator's worst nightmare. The judges must also find it somewhat difficult, not to mention the preselection panel which select the finalists for the show a few months prior to the exhibition.

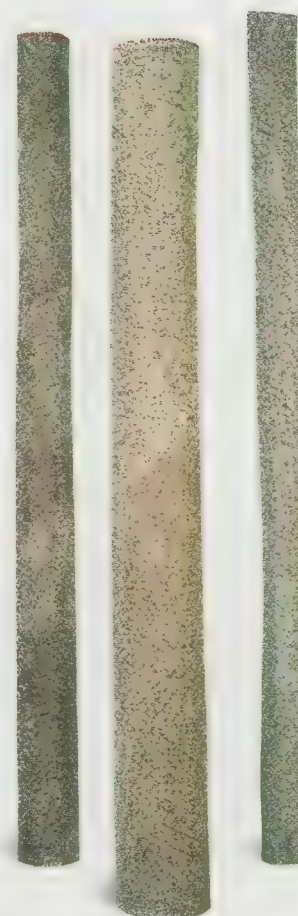
Over 300 entries are received every year and around 100 end up on the walls of the gallery as finalists. What happens to the non-selected artworks? Could the panel miss some jewels in the process? Given the high profile



of the awards, it might be time to organise a salon des refusés in another venue in Darwin, a tradition for any major art prize, which ensures checks and balances and challenges the status quo. One of the dangers that could also kill our long love affair with the awards is that, for some, the element of surprise has gone. Spicing up or questioning the awards categories, diversifying the entertainment of the opening celebrations to encapsulate and mirror the vibrant mix of cultures, could easily rectify this.

The awards must also focus on excellence and avoid the temptation of representing all regions and media in each show in the name of political correctness. Such compromise never does justice to the art and its creators. On a lighter note, in regards to seating arrangements at the opening, we need an intervention to bring back the Telstra blankets that are still treasured by many. Like all family reunions, we look forward to the 2009 NATSIAA vintage.

**BAR**



Gulumbu Yunupingu, **Garak, The Universe**. 2004, natural pigments on wood. Winner of the 2004 NATSIAA. Image courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Ngo a Napatjarri Polard **Swamps west of Nyirripi** 2006 synthetic polymer paint on linen, 150 x 210cm. Winner of the 2006 NATSIAA. Image courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.



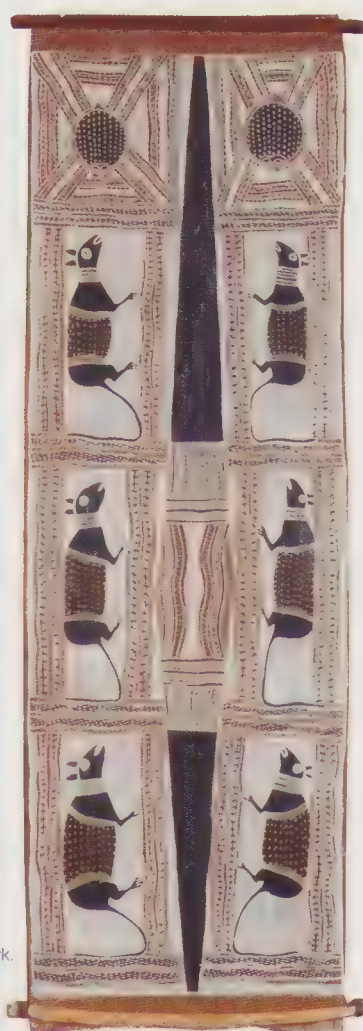
# Where bark means skin

**STEPHANIE RADOK**  
reviews Max Hart's  
lifetime commitment  
to art and education  
through his  
collection of bark  
paintings.

***Skin: UniSA Max Hart Collection of Aboriginal bark paintings***

Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art,  
University of South Australia  
Adelaide  
12 September–30 October 2009

Manjatilna, *Possum Story*, c.1970, natural ochres on bark.  
Max Hart Collection, University of South Australia, image  
© the artist.



Bob Bilinyara, *Dingo men ancestors*, c.1970, natural ochres on bark. Max Hart Collection, University of  
South Australia, image © the artist.

**K**ulila\*: on Aboriginal Education is the name of a book written by Max Hart in 1974, a book vital to Aboriginal education in Australia and whose title reflects his consistent approach to listening to Aboriginal people and encouraging their initiatives.

Educator, author and committed Christian, Hart pioneered the teaching of Aboriginal Studies as a discrete subject in tertiary education in the late 1960s. In this he was influenced by his wife Marjorie, who first met Aboriginal people in 1934 when she formed a church study group in Adelaide with people from Point Pearce. In *Aborigines and schooling: essays in honour of Max Hart* published in 1981, Paul Finnane wrote: "Not the least of his contributions to Aboriginal Studies is the splendid collection of Aboriginal art and artefacts ... His expertise in the subject of Aboriginal Art helped make it one of the most popular units offered in Aboriginal Studies."

The UniSA Max Hart Collection, mostly drawn together in the 1970s, is the rich source material for a new exhibition of bark paintings at the Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art curated by Susan Jenkins, who was for many years a curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Before that, Jenkins worked at Ramingining in central Arnhem land. The last major exhibition she curated was *No Ordinary Place: the art of David Malangi*.

Jenkins contextualises a range of key works from across Arnhem Land, the Tiwi Islands, Groote Eylandt and Mornington Island in terms of an understanding of their subjects, ancestral narratives, social relationships and the bark painting movement's contemporary relevance.

The title of the exhibition, *Skin*, emphasises the integrated nature of art in Aboriginal society. The word for 'skin' in the Yolngu language is the same as the word for 'bark'. The bark of a tree is considered its skin while the core of the tree is considered the bones. Traditionally on death people would be encased in a paperbark coffin or put in a hollow log thereby gaining a new skin. During initiation and life stage ceremonies the same designs as appear on bark paintings are painted on initiates' skin to identify their clan and country. The word 'skin' is also used to underline the importance of social or 'skin' relationships amongst Aboriginal clans. The opportunity to review these fresh and lively artworks now, almost thirty years after Hart began collecting them, emphasises the ongoing vitality of Aboriginal culture and the virtues of what it has to say to us.

\*Pitjantjatjara word for 'listen'.



# In conversation with birds

**ANDREW NICHOLLS**  
tracks the new  
direction of Paul  
Uhlmann's recent  
works, in part  
made possible by a  
residency program.

**To Hear The Language of Birds**  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
26 September–22 November 2009



Paul Uhlmann, *Without Words (fragment XIII)*, 2007, oil on linen canvas, 31 x 41cm. Image by Pascal Veyradier.



Paul Uhlmann, *Without Words (fragment VII)*, 2007, oil on linen canvas, 31 x 41cm. Image by Pascal Veyradier.

**A**midst the crippling shortage of inner-city studio space currently being suffered in Western Australia, Fremantle Arts Centre has been providing relief in the form of a residency program being run from a small studio in its picturesque grounds.

This initiative is proving critical in allowing early- and mid-career artists to produce less commercial, exploratory works that may otherwise have gone unrealised. A case in point was sculptor Susan Flavell's superb *Unhorsed* exhibition of large-scale cardboard works, produced in the space during 2007 (see *aAR* Issue 15). The latest artist to take advantage of the residency is Paul Uhlmann, one of Western Australia's most prominent mid-career artists, whose practice incorporates painting, print and photography. Uhlmann was, in fact, the first artist in residence to use the studio in early 2007, the experience triggering a profound change of conceptual direction that he has recently returned to explore.

Uhlmann's early practice articulated an "interior darkness of the self" that he found reflected in the sombre landscapes of Western Australia's South West. His early works were solemn objects for contemplation, many giving the barest impression of landscape — turbulent clouds or the sky glimpsed through tree branches — others simply abstract compositions in searing acidic green and red, or dully-glittering graphite. His residency at the Arts Centre in 2007 triggered a more optimistic approach to landscape and its interconnectedness to the psyche, the bucolic sound of birds seeming "to almost fly into my mind through the low tin roof as I painted in meditative silence ...". The experience called to mind Giotto's *St. Francis of Assisi* (in which the Saint is depicted in communion with birds) and bird imagery subsequently began to appear in his abstract compositions.

This year, Uhlmann has returned to the residency studio to develop experimental works he hopes will inspire a similar sense of contemplative wonder in his viewer. At the time of writing, his ideas are still in progress, the works possibly to include an installation of dust, prints folded to extend the neo-gothic architecture of the building, a series of primitive camera obscuras (bringing the exterior of the building inside) and even the construction of a tree house to allow artist and audience to experience a new perspective of the arts centre grounds. A point of reference will be Uhlmann's memories of the Arena Chapel in Padua, and the sense of submersion he experienced from Giotto's site-specific paintings. "I think it's really very different," Uhlmann said of his project. "I have this feeling that it's going to be very significant in where I go next." The outcomes will be exhibited alongside the Fremantle Print Award (Australia's most significant award for contemporary printmaking), with Uhlmann's studio open to the public for select times during the exhibition run.

Direct link at [www.artreview.com.au](http://www.artreview.com.au)



## Last but not least

**SASHA GRISHIN**  
casts an eye over the  
late efflorescence  
of a painter with a  
romantic disposition.

**McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907–1917**

National Gallery of Australia

Canberra

14 August–1 November 2009



Frederick McCubbin. *Afterglow*, 1912, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 117cm. Collection National Gallery of Australia



Frederick McCubbin. *Golden Sunlight*, 1914, oil on canvas, 79 x 119.7cm. Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum.

It is a sad truism of Australian art history that many Australian painters, particularly those with a Romantic predisposition, did not age well. If Arthur Streeton had stopped painting at the age of thirty-five, his reputation would not have been adversely affected.

The case with Frederick McCubbin is an exception to the rule. Although he achieved an early popularity for his nationalist, basically academic paintings, such as *Lost* (1886) *While the billy boils* (1886) *Down on his luck* (1889) *A bush burial* (1890) and the monumental triptych *Pioneer*, completed in 1904, it was only late in life, after his only trip to Europe in 1907, that he adopted a freer method of paint application and a more vibrant and sumptuous colour palette. In the final eleven years of his life McCubbin became a much more interesting painter.

The exhibition, *McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907–1917*, curated by Dr Anne Gray, is the first detailed and comprehensive examination of the work of the late McCubbin. The heavy-handed sentimental narrative which characterised much of his earlier oeuvre has largely disappeared as did the desire to paint 'national pictures', to be replaced with almost a hedonistic joy in an immediate reality. The earlier khaki colour scheme favouring grey greens with patches of brown in the late works has given way to a high-keyed colour boldness with pinks and purples juxtaposed with an extensive range of greens, most apparently applied with a palette knife. Now in his early sixties, the 'Prof', as he was known in the 'Heidelberg School' circle, appears to have received a new lease on life as a creative artist.

Wonderful luminous, glowing canvases, including *Winter sunlight* (1908) and *The coming of spring* (1912) are the closest this artist came to the spirit of French Impressionism with rich colour reflexes and loose paint application. Perhaps he did not formulate a coherent colour theory, not adopt a strict divisionist method of paint application, nevertheless he caught the spirit of the French artists more fully than virtually any of his Australian-based contemporaries. In other canvases, including *Afterglow* (1912) and *Golden sunlight* (1914) McCubbin develops an almost bucolic vision of Australia, but not one populated with Art Nouveau nymphs and satyrs, but with happy plump naked women at play near the water's edge. If in his early work the bush was the site of danger, toil and hardship, now it became safe and domesticated, whether it be the landscape near his home 'Carlesberg' in South Yarra, cityscapes, coastal Williamstown and Frankston or the bush setting surrounding his rural retreat at Mount Macedon. While receptive to Monet and the French Impressionist, perhaps it was Turner, Constable and Corot who remained closest to his heart.



# Reconstructing time and place

**TRENT WALTER**  
travels both forwards  
and backwards in a  
survey exhibition at  
the Heide Museum.

**Kathy Temin**

Heide Museum of Modern Art  
Victoria  
1 August–8 November 2009



Kathy Temin, *Duck-Rabbit Problem*, 1991, synthetic fur on composition board, dacron, polystyrene, wire, enamel paint, 52.5 x 188 x 124cm, Collection National Gallery of Victoria. Image courtesy artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery. Photo Peter Akbiyik.



Kathy Temin, *My Monument: White Forest*, 2008, synthetic fur, synthetic filling, steel, MDF board, paint, dimensions variable. Collection Queensland Art Gallery. Image courtesy artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.

The nature of a survey exhibition is special. One can look at the development of an artist's output during their career and see more broadly the relationships of the works to each other. Kathy Temin affords the viewer this unique opportunity.

Since the late 1980s, Temin's art has explored themes of adolescence, identity, memory and displacement across multiple platforms such as sculpture, installation, video, performance and photography. Embracing a do-it-yourself aesthetic in her objects, Temin is also concerned with art and design histories. Her methods of making are deliberate, often flying in the face of modernity's minimal and sleek design legacy. Synthetic fur, polystyrene, felt and clay all feature in works on display at Heide such as *Black and Yellow Corner Problem* 1992, *Duck-Rabbit Problem* 1991, *Home Dis-play* 1994 and *Mantle Garden* 2006–07.

Of equal interest to the viewer is the way co-curators Sue Cramer and Jason Smith, along with Temin, have engaged with the unique architecture of the museum. Indeed, architecture and modern art have played an important role in Temin's artistic output and this exhibition contains past site-specific works reconstructed in Heide's gallery spaces, such as her reworking of Frank Stella's maze painting, *Die Fahne Hoch*, titled *Indoor Monument ... Hard Dis-play* 1995. First exhibited at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Temin's reinterpretation of Stella's painting becomes a knee-high physical maze that the viewer can walk through. Repetition over time and in different forms, through these reconstructions and reworkings, has become one focus of the exhibition.

Another powerful work in the exhibition is *My Monument (White Forest)* 2008, recently part of the exhibition *Optimism* at the Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland. The viewer is drawn into an indoor forest of synthetic fur and stuffing and becomes immersed in the environment Temin has created. It is a work that explores Temin's interest in "the marking of memory through the unconventional forms of the monument" as a result of her personal history as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, as well as the duality of the monument and the memorial. Research for the work included several trips to Hungary, Poland, Germany and Washington to monuments and memorials of personal and broader cultural significance. "I'm interested in the broad collective identification that people feel when there is grief and loss," suggested Temin.

Of the travel that Temin has undertaken since 2004 to follow the threads of her family history, she says, "It's like trying to find the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle." *Kathy Temin* presents a similar experience for the audience: different elements of technique, material and sensibility are drawn together to give an insight into the rigorous work of this most interesting artist's oeuvre.



# Colour, movement and poetry

**ANNEMARIE LOPEZ**  
explores a less  
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Dutch painting —  
exuberant colour and  
restless energy.

*Intensely Dutch Image, abstraction and the word,  
post-war and beyond*

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Wim Oepts, *The Red House* 1959, oil on canvas, 49.5 x 61cm. Collection Museum Henriette Polak, Zutphen, © The artist's estate



Corneille, *The big red sun's voyage*, 1963, oil on canvas, 114.5 x 162.5cm. Collection Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, © C van Beverloo Corneille/ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy, Sydney 2009

After the guns of the Second World War fell silent, and the chaos had ebbed to allow everyday life to inch forward, a group of young Dutch painters contemplated the future. Behind them was geometric abstractionism, epitomised by early twentieth-century movements such as Cubism, Futurism and their own home-grown movement De Stijl. But to the new generation these styles felt cold and intellectual, completely out of touch with the post-war reality of poverty and despair. Eager for a way forward they embraced new ideals of spontaneity and authenticity.

*Intensely Dutch* takes us on their exhilarating journey. It presents fifteen of the most important Dutch artists of this post-war period, including members of the CoBrA movement (Lucebert, Karel Appel and Corneille), *art informel* artists (Jaap Wagemaker, Jan J Schoonhoven and Bram Bogart) and their predecessors Bram van Velde and Willem de Kooning, who rose to prominence post war. It also touches on links between Dutch and Australian art, including paintings, gouaches and drawings by Dutch-born Jan Riske, who has lived and worked in Australia since 1952.

There is an irresistible exuberance to this show as it harnesses the dynamism of the young artists in a headlong rush towards change, renewal and new ways of seeing. But it manages to strike a balance between riots of colour and exuberant line, and simpler, more subdued works. The range of prints, drawings and text-based works also adds depth.

Perhaps the best known of this group is Willem De Kooning, who became a key figure in American abstract expressionism after leaving the Netherlands. The drawings, paintings and prints on display, such as *Minnie Mouse*, typify De Kooning's aggressive expressionist style, bristling with emotional disturbance, barely contained in the abstract style.

But there are also many works by lesser-known Dutch artists that will come as delightful discoveries to audiences. Wim Oepts' luminous semi-abstract landscapes (*The Blue House* and *Highway*), vibrate with beautifully orchestrated colour. There is a brilliance to these works that has a direct lineage to Vincent Van Gogh. Another artist whose works invoke Van Gogh — if in a more sombre tone — is Edgar Fernhout. Fernhout's muted canvases range from self-portraits to still lifes (*Dried Sunflower Heads* and *Beech Bark*) and landscapes, which seem to move gradually away from Van Gogh towards a more personal abstract style. Constant, Appel, Corneille and Jap Nanninga also provide moments of surprise and sheer joy.

The inclusion of text-based works and poetry completes this marvellous tapestry, allowing the viewer to contemplate the rich legacy of this fertile period in Dutch creativity. *Intensely Dutch* doesn't feel like a 'museum collection', rather it is a gathering of vibrant, living work which still has resonance today.



# Fibre, feathers and grass

**LOUISE MARTIN-CHEW** looks at a thoughtful exhibition which reminds us that Aboriginal art — whether traditional or contemporary — is more than bark painting and acrylic on canvas.

**Floating Life: Contemporary Aboriginal Fibre Art**  
Gallery of Modern Art  
Brisbane  
1 August–18 October 2009



Jeannette James. *Trimanya*. (detail), 2007. echidna quills. hand-rolled flax fibre string with echidna claw clasp. Length: 76cm

The big themes — water, light and the universe — are the unifying threads in this unusual collection of Aboriginal fibre art. It is curated by Indigenous fibre specialist Diane Moon, under whose guidance the Queensland Art Gallery has acquired a significant collection comprising over 300 works since 2000.

Moon has cleverly juxtaposed string, baskets, mats and traps with key contemporary artworks in a dramatic installation that brings together ancestral journeys and landscapes, looking to the sky for meaning, and exploring the intrinsic necessity of water for life.

Feathered Banumbirr (ceremonial morning star poles) from Arnhem Land are central to the display, with these traditional referents to the rise of the Morning Star appearing in marked contrast to Jonathan Jones's *Lumination fall wall weave*, a contemporary take on the same subject in an installation of electric lights.

Fiona Foley's *Black Velvet*, a confronting installation of printed canvas dilly bags which is titled after the colloquial term for sexual contact between black and white, is hung alongside innovative works by artists from regional communities. Together, these works illustrate what Anna Haebich refers to in her catalogue essay as "subversive gifts from Aboriginal artists" — beauty offered up with generosity with the corollary of confronting memories of the past. The political impact of the majority of these works is gentle, with the comforting softness of feathers, string and other woven forms allied with longstanding and universal techniques.

The dramatic beauty of Yvonne Koolmatrie's *Hot-air balloon* (2006), made from sedge grass and river rushes, links with the universal nature of the circular forms in Judy Baypungala's *Mat* (2004). The patterning and intense colour in David Wurrbula Gurruwiwi's *Armband tassels* (1993), and their origins in lorikeet and cockatoo feathers, is both grounding and humble. Simple materials are used to create objects with traditional meaning and contemporary drama.

This collection of feathered objects, shell necklaces, rusty metal baskets, Queensland jawun baskets, spinifex vessels, a grass hot-air balloon, mats and traps has come together as a quiet display redolent with its source materials — there are faint smells of grasses and leaves, vegetable dyes, resin and native beeswax. Some of the techniques of making these objects are ancient, others are innovative developments or use new materials to extend into a contemporary audience and market.

A catalogue with major essays by Moon, Haebich and Professor Diana Wood-Conroy adds to the research on this evolving area. Artists are both established and emerging, and the collection is a contemporary snapshot. *Floating Life* focuses welcome attention on a medium which has extended into a new genre within contemporary indigenous Australian art.



David Wurrbula Gurruwiwi. *Armband tassels* (detail), 1993. bark fibre string, red-collared lorikeet and cockatoo feathers, wool, native beeswax. Length: 59–70cm. Purchased with funds from Margaret and Cathryn Mittelheuser through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation. Collection Queensland Art Gallery.



# The art of memory

**BRIONY DOWNES**  
tracks Tricky Walsh's  
adventures in  
the realm where  
narratives — past  
and present —  
resurrect forgotten  
images.

*The Museum of unNatural History*  
Handmark Gallery  
Hobart  
28 August–23 September 2009



Tricky Walsh, *The 69 from Pere Lachaise* 2008, oil on board, 30 x 30cm. Courtesy the artist and Handmark Gallery.



Tricky Walsh, *Mero Denfert-Rochereau (catacombs)* 2008, oil on linen, 50 x 100cm. Courtesy the artist and Handmark Gallery.

Plucking select memories from the subconscious is Tricky Walsh's favourite pastime. Citing comics, film and painting as significant influences, her work is cinematic in style and shifts comfortably across the mediums of painting, video and sculpture. Walsh moved from Western Australia in 2001, and now, based in Hobart, she is deftly spinning rich and intriguing narratives about the small everyday moments that stubbornly stick in your head.

In *The Museum of unNatural History*, Walsh is exhibiting her first solo exhibition since her return from Paris — where she spent six months in 2008 trawling its galleries and museums. She was deeply influenced by the breadth of work available there and became particularly interested in medieval art after spending time at the Musée Cluny (the National Museum of the Middle Ages). The connection Walsh felt came as a surprise. "The paintings completely made sense to me with their narrative-driven, almost illustrative, figure-dominant comic book aesthetics," she says. "The richness of their palette was so alluring." Walsh was also fascinated by the natural history exhibits of taxidermy animals theatrically playing out their passage through time and sought out these experiences to "look for a period ... when things were truly unknown and there was a 'need' to classify difference".

Comprising small oil paintings on plywood (subtitled *The Butterfly Room*) and larger works on canvas, Walsh fleshes out her *Museum of unNatural History* in a series of fantastical snapshots — images of travel memories pinned and labelled like historical specimens. In *Metro Denfert Rochereau-Catacombs*, two images nestle together to reveal a parallel universe. On one side, there's a quiet scene of passengers idling on a train, the mapped grid of their journey framing the base of the image. Directly opposite, only one passenger fully remains, their everyday clothing replaced with a simple smock, scythe and skull mask. The image recalls a timely journey to underground catacombs and reminds us of the inevitable decline of those above ground — a poignant echo of the fertile history underlying most European cities.

Alongside the paintings, acting as the centrepiece to the exhibition, is a cavalcade of disjointed animals, each painted on plywood, capering through the middle of the gallery and paying homage to the exhibits found in the natural history museums of Europe and the USA. Finally, a small selection of intricate architectural dioramas deconstructed and displayed under glass like rare skeletal objects brings a three-dimensional aspect to the show. This highly detailed and captivating collection of work, *The Museum of unNatural History* is a surreal insight into Walsh's travels and demonstrates willingness to brave new challenges with much success.

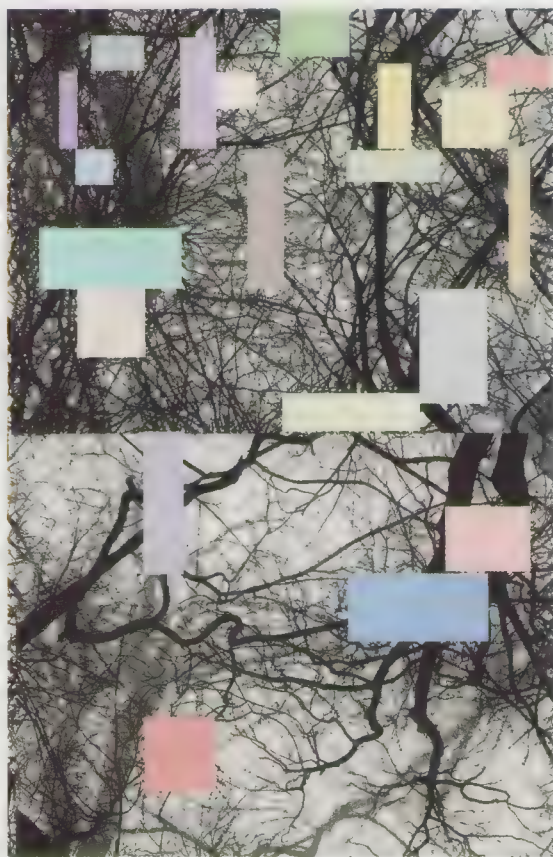


# Australian Art — ducal setting

Works by artist and former director of the Sydney College of the Arts Richard Dunn take a surprising turn. CRAIG JUDD examines this.

Richard Dunn. *The Fibonacci Tree#1-3*, 2006-09. acrylic and screen ink on canvas, two panels 340 x 170cm each. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Barry Keldoulis.

Richard Dunn. *Labyrinth#2*, 2004. acrylic on canvas, 190 x 160cm. Private collection. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney.



This year, the Bundesgartenschau 2009 (BUGA) is being staged in the grounds of the ducal castle of Schwerin, Pomerania. Visitors will encounter examples of twenty-first-century garden design as well as the newly renovated historical gardens.

There are grand vistas of formal plantings from the Baroque period as well as the more 'random' and 'natural' compositions derived from the English landscape school. Trees articulate and define the spaces of each style to radically different effect. Richard Dunn's latest series, *Fibonacci Trees*, were initially conceived of as part of a proposal for this festival.

There are three enormous paintings that dominate the spaces of GBK. These *Fibonacci Trees* are strangely beautiful. In previous works Richard Dunn has used the ideas of Euclid and Wittgenstein, not as programmatic illustrations but as platforms for exploring the fields of vision. The links between the senses, language and the constructions of image is a constant concern. Dunn asks, how does vision work?

Here in this particular discourse/series there is a contrast between the tonal variations of the photo silk-screened background and the floating box-like shapes that teeter across the picture plane. The shadowy overlay of deciduous tree branches takes the eye back into infinity while the flat, pretty colours and geometric shapes or containers demand a recognition of the games of classic representational illusionism. There is a clash of networks of information but also a balance of forces.

The *Fibonacci Trees* (2009) play with the interpretation of signs and structures. The mathematical system we call the Fibonacci progression and the use of zero was introduced to Europe in the early thirteenth century by Leonardo of Pisa. However, the theories were actually developed in North India by such philosophers as Pingala (450-250 BC) and Virahanka (c.550 AD), amongst others. Today, the Fibonacci series is invoked by scientists as a way to explain such natural phenomena as the curve of a wave, the spirals of shells and the branching of trees. It is an order imposed over nature.

These paintings are also a deliberate reference to one of the heroes of non-objective abstraction — Piet Mondrian. The *Fibonacci Trees* is in part homage to the unresolved but breakthrough Piet Mondrian works *Composition with colour planes* (1917). While Richard Dunn's works share the overlays of planes, the pulse and sense of dispersal of the originals, one wonders whether Dunn would also ascribe to the theosophical notions that underpinned Mondrian's abstractions — a tenuous balance of idealised forces in nature — the forest/vertical/male and the sea/horizontal/female?

If anything, *Fibonacci Trees*, like most of Dunn's works, questions the authorities that govern our vision, whether it be wacky spiritualism or the rigorous ideologies of the sciences and politics.



# e

## editor's choice

**Thornton Walker, Paintings**  
**Beaver Galleries**  
**Canberra**  
**7–26 May 2009**  
[www.beavergalleries.com.au](http://www.beavergalleries.com.au)

The empty bowl has been present in Walker's oils and watercolours over recent years. In this exhibition it is joined by other eloquent, and seemingly random, still-life accoutrements.



Thornton Walker. *December still life IV*. 2008. watercolour. 56 x 56cm

Highlighting memorable exhibitions in galleries, museums and artist-run spaces by established, developing, departed and emerging artists.

**Narelle Jubelin: Cannibal Tours**  
**Heide Museum of Modern Art**  
**Melbourne**  
**28 February–12 July 2009**  
[www.heide.com.au](http://www.heide.com.au)

Narelle Jubelin's work is created from petit-point, a genteel needleworking technique favoured by grandmothers of a certain era. Her subjects, however, have a sharp historical edge and in this installation are interspersed with modernist works such as the iconic Sidney Nolan *Boy and the Moon* and tribal masks.



Narelle Jubelin, installation view from *Cannibal Tours*. Exhibition curated by Dr Ann Stephen. Photograph John Gollings

**Michael Johnson — New Paintings 2009**  
**Tim Olsen Gallery**  
**Sydney**  
**19 May–7 June 2009**  
[www.timolsengallery.com](http://www.timolsengallery.com)

Michael Johnson's vibrant and undulating surfaces have often suggested wave motion, but this recent body of work has been inspired by the raw colours of the Kimberley region in Western Australia.



Michael Johnson. *Kimberley's*. 2008. oil on linen. 153 x 122cm



**Judith Wright Desire**  
**Sophie Gannon Gallery**  
**Melbourne**

19 May–13 June 2009

[www.sophiegannongallery.com.au](http://www.sophiegannongallery.com.au)

Judith Wright's recent body of paintings is, in tonality and in its spare simplicity, not unlike the offerings of her namesake, the poet Judith Wright.



Judith Wright, **Desire [13]**, 2009, acrylic and wax on Japanese paper, 100 x 100cm. Courtesy the artist and Sophie Gannon Gallery

**Marion Borgelt Moonlight in my Veins**  
**Dominik Mersch Gallery**  
**Sydney**

30 April–6 June 2009

[www.dominikmerschgallery.com](http://www.dominikmerschgallery.com)

Marion Borgelt's installation is calm, reflective and perfect in both execution and form. Intriguing monochromatic matte shapes share space with others whose colour shimmers quietly.



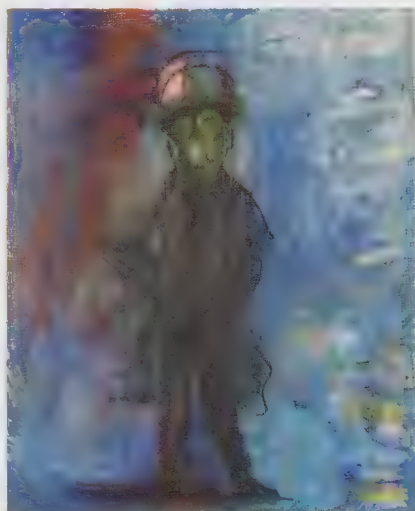
Marion Borgelt, **Lunar Warp: No. 7**, 2008, gold leaf, timber, polyurethane, 89.5cm diameter. Courtesy the artist and Dominik Mersch Gallery

**Kevin Connor Paintings and Drawings 2009**  
**Liverpool Street Gallery**  
**Sydney**

16 May–11 June 2009

[www.liverpoolstgallery.com.au](http://www.liverpoolstgallery.com.au)

Kevin Connor's imagery, with its felted and agitated lines, has become darker in palette of late. This railwayman may be surrounded by colour but a melancholy mood prevails.



Kevin Connor, **The Railwayman 1930s**, 2009, oil on canvas, 242 x 196cm. Image courtesy the artist and Liverpool Street Gallery.

**Gareth Sansom**  
**John Buckley Gallery**  
**Melbourne**

17 June–4 July 2009

[www.johnbuckley.com.au](http://www.johnbuckley.com.au)

Gareth Sansom is a veteran of the Australian art world. His mixed and surprising alignments of imagery and satirical references have recently become fully saturated in colour.



Gareth Sansom, **Alchemy**, 2008–09, oil and enamel on linen, 183 x 244cm. Courtesy the artist and John Buckley Gallery

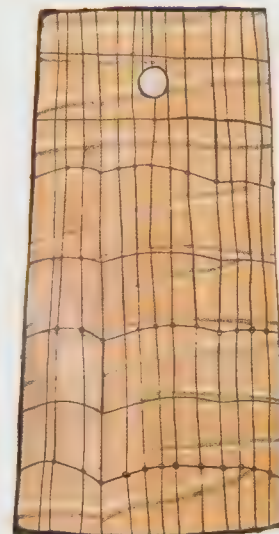
**John Mawurndjul, Bark Paintings, Ceremonial Poles**  
**Annandale Galleries**  
**Sydney**

20 May–27 June 2009

[www.annandalegalleries.com.au](http://www.annandalegalleries.com.au)

Annandale Galleries has been a long-standing supporter of a talented group of Australian Indigenous painters, none more so than John Mawurndjul, whose delicate yet decisive imagery suggests the patterns of basket weaving.

John Mawurndjul, **Bark Painting**, 2008, natural earth pigments on bark, 157 x 72cm. Courtesy Annandale Galleries

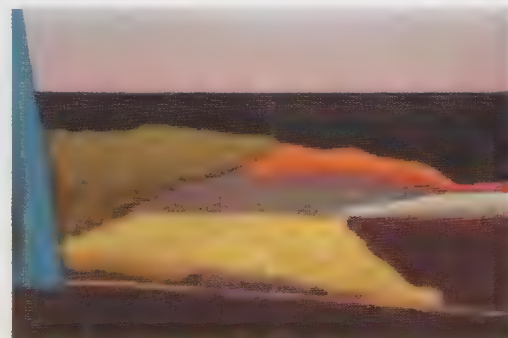


**Ian Parry, 43 Degrees South, Recent paintings and works on paper**  
**James Makin Gallery**  
**Melbourne**

11 May–3 June 2009

[www.jamesmakingallery.com](http://www.jamesmakingallery.com)

Ian Parry's recent group of landscapes, with their mixed horizon lines and carefully delineated almost abstract areas of solid colour, are an interesting contribution to the Australian landscape painting tradition.



Ian Parry, **Window**, 2009, oil on linen, 91.5 x 137cm. Courtesy the Artist and James Makin Gallery.



**David Walker: Anatomy of the object**

**Art Gallery of Western Australia**

**Perth**

**27 June–18 October 2009**

**[www.artgallery.wa.gov.au](http://www.artgallery.wa.gov.au)**

David Walker is one of the most respected metalsmiths and jewellers in the country. His work in gold, silver, titanium and steel is both robust and delicate, often with moveable components. The Art Gallery of Western Australia has honoured him with an exhibition which traces the offerings of his long career.



David Walker, **memento mori 1 (pendant)** 2009  
925 silver, stainless steel, carved and painted  
Victorian ash, 13.2 x 5.3 x 2.9cm. Collection of the  
artist. © David Walker

**Andrew Powell: Remnants**

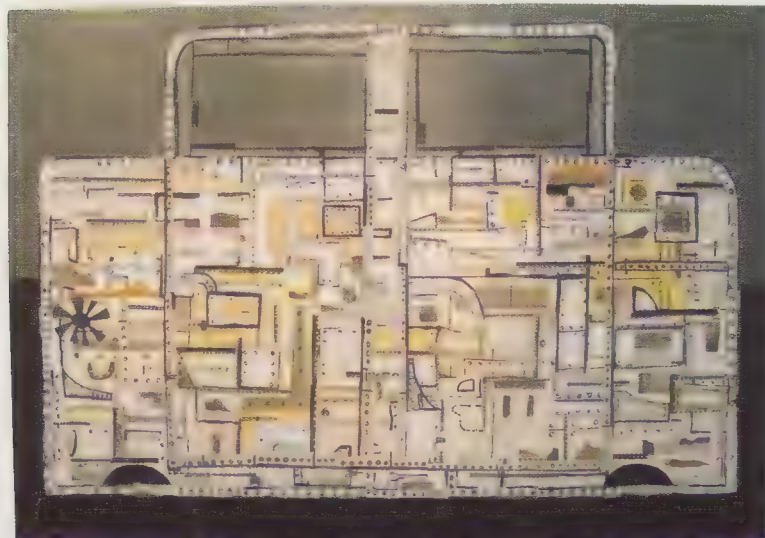
**M16 Artspace**

**Canberra**

**30 April–10 May 2009**

**[www.m16artspace.com](http://www.m16artspace.com)**

Andrew Powell continues to explore the whimsical possibilities of paint, collage and found objects, often arranging them in enigmatic settings.



Andrew Powell, **Hull**, 2009, acrylic and collage on canvas, 120 x 170cm.

**Important Oceanic Art**

**Michael Reid Gallery**

**Sydney**

**13 May–16 June 2009**

**[www.michaelreid.com.au](http://www.michaelreid.com.au)**

The Pacific region has been a rich trove of objects: tools, implements and ornaments which are embedded in the rituals and daily lives of their cultures. Some are ceremonial, some are sacred, others might be purely ornamental. This shell head ornament looks contemporary in its austerity and simplicity.



**Kap Kap, pectoral and head ornament**, Solomon Islands,  
clamshell, turtle shell, diameter 15cm.

**West via East — a homage to Ian Fairweather**

**Damien Minton Gallery**

**Sydney**

**13–30 May 2009**

**[www.damienmintongallery.com.au](http://www.damienmintongallery.com.au)**

A timely exhibition which celebrates the enduring mystique and influence of the reclusive painter Ian Fairweather on contemporary Australian practitioners. In a sculpture created after Fairweather's celebrated *Monastery*, Jan King has perfectly condensed Fairweather's wayward linear fluency.



Jan King, **Monastery**, 2006, painted steel, 198 x 110 x 70cm. Photographer Michael Bradfield

**Peter Solness: Illuminated Landscapes**

**Storm Gallery**

**Sydney**

**4–30 May 2009**

**[www.giclee.com.au](http://www.giclee.com.au)**

In this exhibition of photographs, Solness has effortlessly blended the idea of tens of thousands of years of Indigenous petroglyphic imagery with the neon sign — the very encapsulation of our contemporary life.



Peter Solness, **Rock Engraving X**, 2009, print on Somerset photo rag watercolour paper, 103.5 x 74.5cm. Limited edition of 15



**Peter Gardiner, Letters of St Paul to the Corinthians**  
**Damien Minton Gallery**  
**Sydney**  
**22 April–9 May 2009**  
[www.damienmintongallery.com.au](http://www.damienmintongallery.com.au)



Peter Gardiner, *Bonfire (Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians)*, 2009, oil on canvas, 140 x 120cm

Congratulations to Newcastle-based artist Peter Gardiner for winning the Muswellbrook Art Prize 2009.

Peter received \$15,000 first prize for the painting *Letters of St Paul I*, which was selected by the judge Ron Ramsey, Director of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery.

It is unusual for biblical themes to be tackled in the modern world with such focused realism. This particular painting by Gardiner makes vivid St Paul's words: "Each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done."

**Sam Leach: The Margin**  
**Nellie Castan Gallery**  
**Melbourne**  
**5–27 June 2009**  
[www.nelliecastangallery.com](http://www.nelliecastangallery.com)

Admirers and collectors of Sam Leach's works, who are accustomed to the sensation that his animals and birds may walk or fly from the canvas, will be surprised by this new series, where animals are reflected back at themselves as a geometric construction of origami simplicity.



Sam Leach, *Crocodile Reflection*, 2009, oil and resin on wood, 26 x 16cm



**Figurative Painting 2009**  
**Hill Smith Gallery**  
**Adelaide**  
**1–24 May 2009**  
[www.hillsmithgallery.com.au](http://www.hillsmithgallery.com.au)

Anna Platten works as effortlessly in oils and she does with charcoal. As in most works which render dreams, there are elements of the surreal in a scene of no fixed vantage.

Anna Platten, *The Waking Dream*, 2009, charcoal on paper, 147 x 83cm

**Revisited**  
**TarraWarra Museum of Art**  
**Victoria**  
**29 March–2 August 2009**  
[www.twma.com.au](http://www.twma.com.au)

Fred Cress caught the post-painterly abstraction bug in the 1970s, exemplified in works of American Jules Olitski, and it resulted in some of the most perfectly nuanced works of his career.

Fred Cress, *Manning*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 213.4 x 166.5cm. Gift of Eva and Marc Besen in 2002. TarraWarra Museum of Art Collection



**Autumn Exhibition**  
**Rushcutters Bay Gallery**  
**Sydney**  
**15 April–7 May 2009**  
[www.rbgallery.com](http://www.rbgallery.com)



James Robertson, *Outa there*, 2009, oil on Belgian linen, 122 x 167cm. Courtesy Rushcutters Bay Gallery

James Robertson captures the drama of shifting atmospherics in landscapes with low horizons. He will slip in a small storm-tossed boat, bewildered livestock or an abandoned car to focus on this unpredictability.



Cate Maddy, Lauren Potts and Miranda Skoczek  
Harrison Galleries  
Sydney  
13 June–July 2 2009  
[www.harrisongalleries.com.au](http://www.harrisongalleries.com.au)

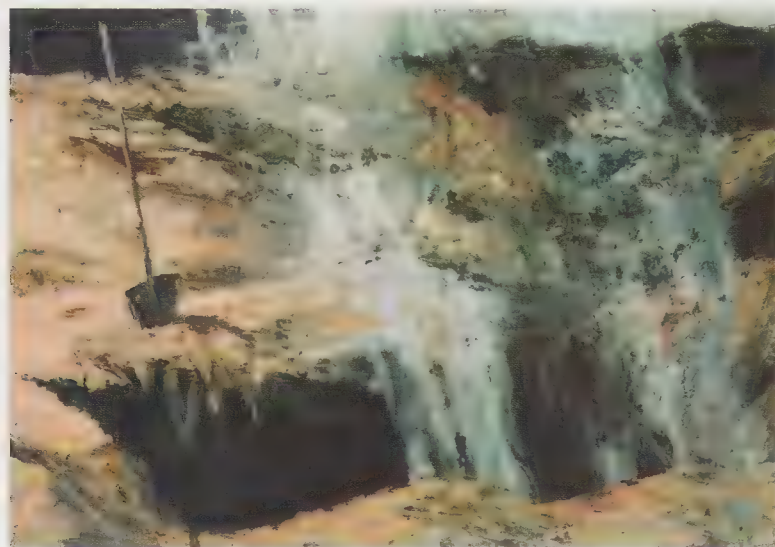
Bold, luminously coloured abstractions which seem to have assembled themselves effortlessly on the canvas are a hallmark of Miranda Skoczek's recent paintings.



Miranda Skoczek, *Untitled*. 2008, oil, acrylic, enamel on canvas, 137x122cm

Gallipoli Art Prize Exhibition 2009  
Gallipoli Memorial Club  
Sydney  
27 April–8 May 2009  
[www.gallipoli.com.au](http://www.gallipoli.com.au)

Of all the ways in which a Gallipoli scene might be remembered and rendered, what better than to illustrate the most prosaic and fruitless of a soldier's tasks — the digging of trenches.



Euan McLeod, *Pink Landscape with Smoke and Shovel*. 2008–09, oil on polycanvas, 84 x 120cm. (Winner of the Gallipoli Art Prize, 2009.) Photography by Michel Brouet

Tamara Dean, *Seek. Ritualism Series*  
Charles Hewitt Gallery  
Sydney  
25 June–14 July 2009  
[www.charleshewitt.com.au](http://www.charleshewitt.com.au)

In spite of the exhibition title *Ritualism*, Tamara Dean's memorable photographs captured in haunting blue-green light seem more about isolated and private moments than any repetitive acts.



Tamara Dean, *Ritualism 1*, 2008, pigment giclée print on archival cotton rag paper, 76.2 x 101.6cm

Forest Forms and other ceramics by  
Bernard Sahm  
Peter Pinson Gallery  
Sydney  
27 May–13 June 2009  
[www.peterpinsongallery.com](http://www.peterpinsongallery.com)

A sterling group of whimsical ceramics from respected long-standing practitioner Bernard Sahm reminds us that art is the result when the craftsmanship which creates it is inspired.

Bernard Sahm, *Forest Form, Blue*, ceramic, 1992, 48cm high



Nicola Loder, *tourist 3: sighted child 1–11*  
Helen Gory Galerie  
Melbourne  
15 April–2 May 2009  
[www.heiengory.com](http://www.heiengory.com)

The ephemeral and the fantastical have been rendered with Loder's digital manipulation of photographs of children's faces.



Nicola Loder, *tourist 3: sighted child 1–11 (3)* Lambda digital print clear mounted to 10mm perspex, 120 x 90cm





Kate Bergin, *The Dinner Party* 2008, oil on canvas, 102 x 122cm.

**Tabletop Variations** New works by Kate Bergin  
Curated by Anne Runhardt and Helene Hagemans  
fortyfive downstairs gallery  
Melbourne  
19–30 May 2009  
[www.fortyfivedownstairs.com](http://www.fortyfivedownstairs.com)

In the 1990s, Kate Bergin's finely rendered imagery began with fruit, flowers and cutlery which had a life of their own. In her recent body of work, Bergin's characteristic white draped table remains and so do the spoons, but they have been supplemented by an unlikely menagerie.

**Chiaroscuro**  
**Artereal Gallery**  
Sydney  
20 May–5 June 2009  
[www.artereal.com.au](http://www.artereal.com.au)

"A group exhibition of invited artists' responses to the idea of light and dark in a visual, emotional, narrative or physical sense." Curated by Barbara Douse.

Georgina Read's response to an exhibition brief, *Chiaroscuro* (the effects produced by the manipulation of light and shadow on a canvas) produced icebergs which appeared to float in the stratosphere.

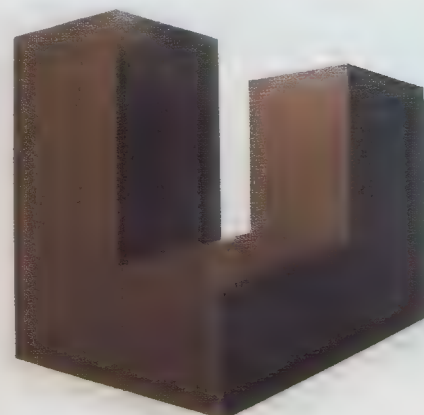


Georgina Read, *Untitled, Chapter 2*, 2008, oil on linen, 40 x 60cm

**Paul Selwood Perspective Cutouts**  
**Tin Sheds Gallery**  
**The University of Sydney**  
19 June–11 July 2009  
[www.faculty.arch.usyd.edu.au/art\\_workshop](http://www.faculty.arch.usyd.edu.au/art_workshop)

Paul Selwood's works look as solid as the mild steel the originals were fabricated in, but these are trompe l'oeil (that is, to trick the eye). What appears to have a three-dimensional monumentality is, in fact, a perspective cut-out.

Pau Selwood, *A complex silence* 2009, steel, varnish  
242.5 x 122.5cm. Courtesy Watters Gallery



**Figuration**  
**Jam Factory Contemporary Craft and Design**  
Adelaide  
9 May–21 June 2009  
[www.jamfactory.com.au](http://www.jamfactory.com.au)



Jeff Koons may have started something with his inflatable bunny cast in brightly polished steel, but Michael Doolan has taken it further. An entire rabbit family with someone else's tools of trade has been cast in ceramic with a platinum lustre finish.

Michael Doolan, *Rabbit Family*, 2008  
ceramic, platinum lustre, 47 x 43 x 55cm  
Photo by Graham Baring

**Peter Booth**  
**Rex Irwin Art Dealer**  
Sydney  
16 June–11 July 2009  
[www.rexirwin.com](http://www.rexirwin.com)

Peter Booth's anonymous looming figures in wastelands are his signature works, but occasionally an intimate portrait head — occupying the entire surface of the canvas — makes an appearance.

Peter Booth,  
*Painting (Head, blue background)*, 2008  
oil on canvas, 33 x 30.5cm





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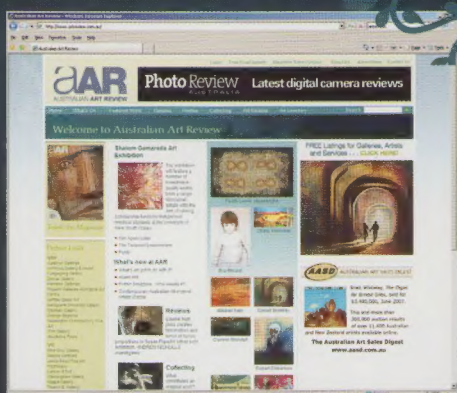
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## Robin Wallace-Crabbe last word



Robin Wallace-Crabbe, *Jug half-empty*, 2009, oil over acrylic, 100 x 100cm. Courtesy the artist.

“There is art and there are young people having fun.” That was how, in the 1970s, the proprietor-editor of *ART INTERNATIONAL* explained his magazine’s take on what was happening. His ‘art’ was principally the abstract painting of that era. The young (and middle-aged) having so much fun were post-Duchamp, post-Dada types intent on putting forward a sequence of propositions in the form of borrowed commercial images, found objects, paint-smearing naked women printed onto canvas, or sharing a room with a coyote.

Of course, the magazine editor was avoiding that ‘what is art?’ question. Everybody does because it’s very like the ‘what is God?’ one. Both ‘God’ and ‘art’ make people so angry. Yet as anger builds and art-wars break out between one or another cluster of the cognoscenti, the rest of the world gets on with life, and in that life engages in activities that might one day be recognised as part of the ‘art’ Hydra.

Well beyond the domain of battling arties, gentle people offer paper and crayons to children and lovingly wonder at the marks they make, books are devoted to paintings by cats and monkeys, aged men arrange tools on some shed’s shadow-board, picturing imaginations discover star patterns or furtive images in cumulous clouds.

Could the idea, ‘art’ — never adequately defined — actually suggest that everybody and anybody can be their own creative genius?

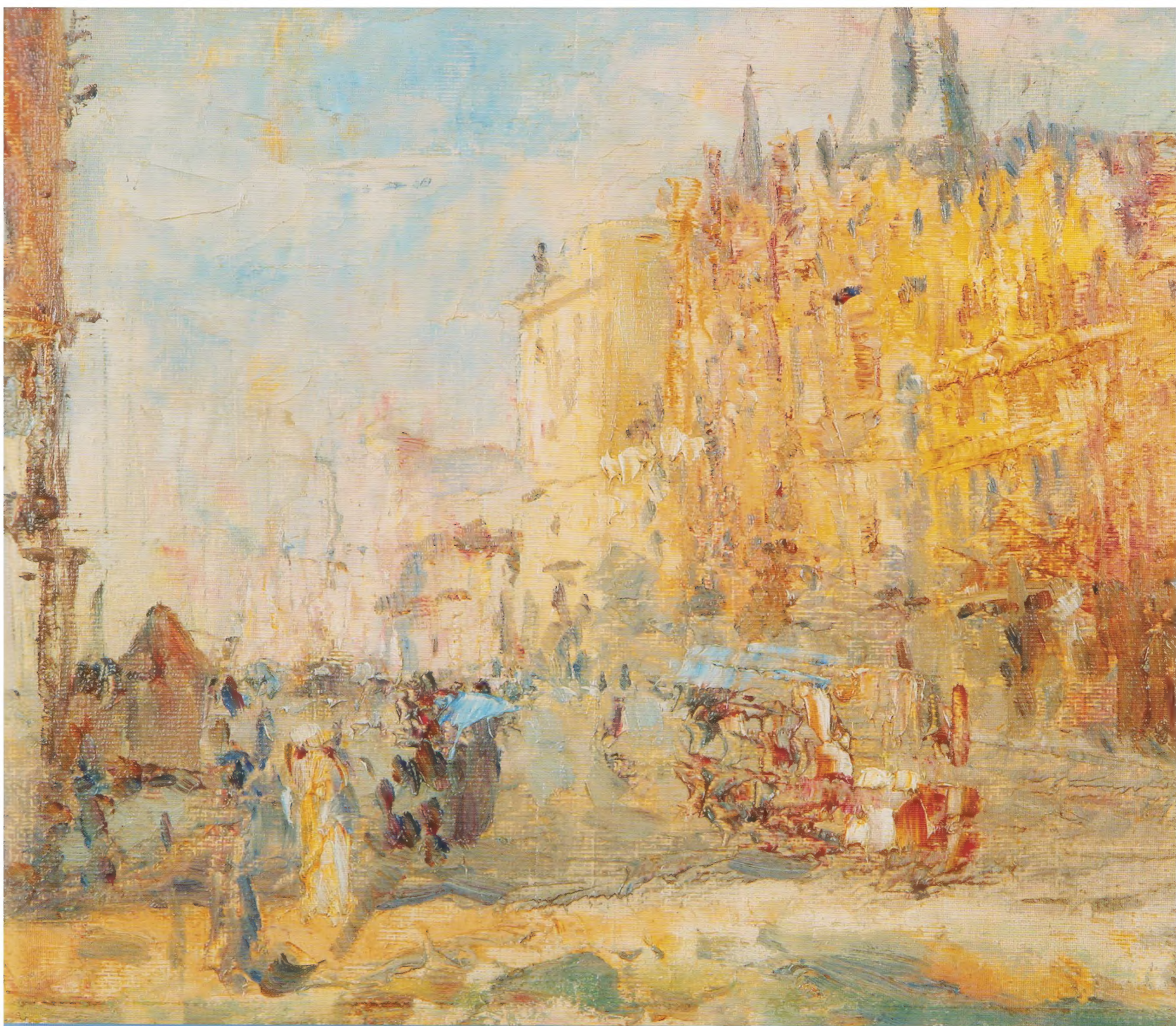
In European art’s history, towards the end of the nineteenth-century and into the first decade or two of the twentieth-century, some young people, reacting against boring pictures produced for a burgeoning market, opted for arty fun: Ludwig Kirschner danced naked while pursuing the ‘primitive’, Picasso and Braque mucked about with everyday materials, Paul Gauguin said ‘to hell with it’ and headed south. In the 1880s, Toulouse-Lautrec was painting non-idealised lesbian couples snuggling in bed and prostitutes lining up for some medical exam — nice, rich, religious people weren’t going to collect such stuff. What the ‘having fun’ artists of that period were intent on doing was breaking rules of professional conduct, trying new things, remaking themselves several times over while letting commercial realities go hang.

So much has happened since those 1880s to 1920s do-your-own-thing adventurers got going. European ‘art’ has, albeit grudgingly, even come to accept images from other cultures as ‘art’ rather than mere evidence supporting anthropological propositions.

Right now, artists confront an art-can-be-anything situation. Such possibilities! Yet they emerge from market-conscious art schools into a not-fun illusion which, combined with sophisticated art promotion, decodes into professionalism. Is it possible for these people to garner as much pleasure as some old geezer wondering if his adjustable spanners look best on the shadow-board right next to the claw hammers?

Growing up we become products of our culture and in doing so respond to its demands in conditioned ways. In Australia, in the 1920s and 1930s, for most people ‘artist’ meant somebody working outdoors with oil paint on canvas, transforming what was seen into a pattern of deft brushstrokes. Such a limited concept of ‘art’ was easy to challenge. Rebelling against all and anything is so much harder — maybe even impossible. Could the solution to all this be to rebel against nothing, stay quiet, not even dare hope for something to arrive in your programmed picturing imagination? Perhaps everybody, established and big-selling artists included, deserves a period of reflection and play — well away from the word ‘art’. **AR**





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